

I FOLLOW MY STARS



THE AUTHOR

Fr.

I FOLLOW MY STARS

An Autobiography

By

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AUTHOR OF

'SATAN IN DISGUISE' "PLUNGE INTO LIFE"
ETC.



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FOR PUTTI

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CHAPTER I

CHAMPAGNE BIRTH

My champagne birth—A yogi tells the day of my birth and death—I conduct while my uncle, Felix von Weingartner, plays the piano—Karl May's 'penny dreadfuls'—My relationship with a Lord Mayor of London—I become a knight instead of a girl—The knight rides out.

NO one can say that I forced my way into this world: in point of fact I did my utmost to keep out of it. I was perfectly comfortable where I was, perfectly at home, and I did not in the least want to move. But there was a conspiracy of three against me: my mother, my father, and the doctor.

As I found some years later, again to my disadvantage, one against three makes for a rather unequal match, and in this case the difference between the respective weights of the opposing sides was outrageously wide, even though I myself did weigh just over ten pounds. But in spite of this handicap I put up a good fight, and my resistance was effective enough to rouse my most formidable opponent, the doctor, into unfair methods of attack, quite without protest from my father.

When, however, he went so far as to take up a forceps my father was sportsman enough to interfere to the extent of telling him that he would break every bone in his body if anything went wrong. That made the doctor sit back and consider his own chances: he stood five foot seven, my father six foot three, and the difference in weight between them was more than six times my own miserable little ten pounds.

The doctor wiped his forehead and asked for—*champagne*: moreover, he drank a whole bottle to keep his

courage up and his hands steady. This struck my father as an excellent idea, and he promptly followed suit, evidently in proportion to the difference in weight. He must have miscalculated though, for he disposed of two bottles of champagne on his own.

All this time my unfortunate mother had been left as my sole opponent. I had grown too strong for her to fight; in fact, I simply knocked her out, and she lay back unconscious.

The doctor turned in time to see the collapse of his ally, and, having the bottle of champagne in his hand, he did the first thing that came into his head and gave her a real good dose of it.

It had a marvellous effect: first and foremost it kept my mother's heart beating just when she was in a state of serious collapse; further, it had a surprising influence on me. Even a teaspoonful of champagne would be no mean dose for a newborn baby, and I was completely submerged in it and not even newborn. I must have been quite tipsy, and I still consider that, on my father's and the doctor's part, it was tantamount to doping their opponent.

I became extremely cheerful, thought probably—though this I cannot swear to—that there would be more of that excellent stuff outside, and so came at once into the world, the doctor helping just a little with his forceps.

"He'll grow up a wit, you'll see," he declared later, much relieved at the turn of events. "It's a champagne birth."

He and my father then drank each other's health with enthusiasm at having so successfully tricked me into the world.

That happened on the 24th of January, 1903, in Berlin. More than thirty years later the whole incident was recalled to me rather strangely, this time not in Berlin, but in Bombay. It was my fourth day in India, and I still re-

tained the faculty of being surprised, a faculty which disappears after the first three or four weeks in that strange land.

Some friends of mine, a young Parsee couple, persuaded me to visit a yogi. I already had my own mental picture of a yogi: a scraggy sort of individual with rankly overgrown hair, rankly overgrown beard, uncut finger- and toe-nails, the whole smeared with ash twice daily and served sitting on a board studded with upturned nails.

I was rather disconcerted when I saw his house, a nice, *bourgeois* little place in the Daddur district near Victoria Station. That was all wrong: a yogi must live at the foot of the Himalayas, or, at the very least, in some dimly lighted cave.

My disappointment grew when I saw him. There was no beard; his hair was short and well cut; he was not smeared with ashes; and he sat on a couch instead of a nail-studded board. He did not mortify his flesh; he even smoked cigarettes, and, what is more, he was a Doctor of Philosophy. But he had unusually large dark eyes, the eyes of a hypnotist. His name was Sarmananda.

"Ask me whatever you wish," he said quietly. "I will answer all your questions."

I thought a bit. Then I said, "I only want to know two dates—the day of my birth and the day of my death."

If he could tell me the true date of my birth, I thought, then it might be that the second and uncontrollable date would also be the true one. He might, of course, be nothing more than a thought-reader, so I made up my mind that in that case I would spoil his little game by concentrating vigorously on a wrong date. I fixed my mind on the 12th of May, 1904 . . . the 12th of May, 1904 . . . the 12th of May, 1904 . . .

The yogi sat stiffly upright, his lips pressed tightly together. His heavy eyelids drooped until a small slit was

all that I could see of his eyes. "The 12th of May, 1904," I thought.

And then it came.

"According to your calendar, the day of your birth is the twenty-fourth of January, 1903. You are born in the evening, for it is nearly dark outside. But there is something falling from the skies—something which is not rain. It is like a cloud of little stars, white, eight-pointed stars—I think it must be snow." The yogi's haggard face became almost beautiful in a quick smile. "I have never seen snow before, you know," he said simply.

I found no words for answer. His strange vision touched me deeply. Snow he saw then for the first time in his life, and it was not the snow of the Himalayas: it was that snow which had fallen from the skies on Berlin more than thirty years before.

Dr Sarmananda did not ask me if he was right: he knew he was. He only said quietly, "Do you still wish to know on what day you will die?"

It flashed through my mind to say "No," but my Parsee friends were sitting beside me, and I saw them look at me. I did not want to be a coward, though perhaps that very feeling constituted the real cowardice. Moreover, I thought, there was a lot to be said for knowing of one's death in advance, for not being taken by surprise when it came: one could make ready, could make provision for one's family in peace and quiet. But what if he said, "In six months"? Or "In a fortnight"?

Or—"To-morrow"?

I looked at him and said as quietly as I could, "Yes."

The yogi only nodded and closed his eyes. Nearly a whole minute went by: it was not a pleasant one. I gritted my teeth. At last he opened his eyes again.

"According to your calendar, the sixteenth of February, 1964—your death."

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I felt a certain wave of relief: I had a good many years ahead of me, and that spelled life and love, adventures and experiences. I was satisfied. Whether I shall still be satisfied on the 15th of February, 1964, I have no means of telling—in fact, I rather doubt it. And yet—I think I was right not to have been a coward. . . .

II

That ten-pound baby, vintage 1903, began to grow, and, growing, began to meet with the most enthralling experiences. Not even, in later life, can my first walk through virgin jungle be compared with my first intrusion into my father's study: the latter was so infinitely more exciting and sensational.

I had not long learned to walk by myself, but I had reached the stage of not needing to sit down every third yard, and I was all out for some real exploration. Luckily for me, for I could not possibly have manipulated the handle, my father's study door was open, so in I went, alone and unarmed, to face a whole world of new and unknown things.

First, there was a table whose feet were real faces, faces which could be stroked or even slapped without retaliation. Later they came to me in dreams and bit me horribly. Even now I still dislike that table.

On its top, however, that day I discovered a number of cool, smooth little metal things, and I had a good look at them: one was the very thing to cut the curtain bobbles off with; another was a little box that made a nice noise if one shook it about. It could be opened, too, and there were little sticks in it with nice dark heads.

I played with these sticks for a while, and I suppose I must have rubbed one of them accidentally against one side of the box, for it puffed and flamed up and became very

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hot, so that I threw it away in disgust—even to-day I do not like explosive characters. The small stick went on burning away for a while on the thick blue Turkey carpet and then went out.

Later, when my father came back to the studio, he found me fast asleep, with my head in the overturned wastepaper-basket, and an open penknife and a spilled box of matches beside me on the floor. There was a goodish hole in the carpet, and the curtains were bereft of two bobbles. Though he evidently considered me too young for a beating I none the less gathered pretty definitely from his manner on awaking me that he disapproved of my exploits. The pretty Spreewald girl who was my nurse, also found asleep with a bottle—not my milk-bottle—by her side, was not left in doubt either, for she was dismissed at once, and I never saw her again. In her stead came Anny, that good-natured little old woman who is to this day still with my mother.

III

By the time I was three I had begun to show an extravagant variety of tastes. A sister of my mother's had married Felix von Weingartner, and he often used to play the piano at our house. One day, promoting a footstool to serve as rostrum, I conducted Uncle Felix's playing, a new experience for this great conductor. His comment, "The boy has got a sense of rhythm," firmly convinced my mother of my future as a conductor superior to, or, at the very least, the equal of, Weingartner himself.

I was pretty pleased with myself in those days, and I very well remember my irritation with the fuss made over the christening of my little sister. The house was full of relatives and guests, the priest arrived, the whole place was in a turmoil. There I stood in my best dress, and yet no-

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body took any notice of me at all: I did not count. I was not in the least interested in the christening ceremony, and, indeed, was pretty bored with the whole subject of my sister's arrival. It had already caused me enough inconvenience—noise strictly forbidden, and all that sort of thing. This was the last straw: dressed up and ready to be noticed, and yet every one's attention was concentrated on that mewling little bundle in the priest's arms! I was furious. Then I got hold of the footstool that had once served me as conductor's rostrum and turned a splendid somersault over it—my newest trick that only my mother knew of. There was a ripple of quickly suppressed laughter; then Uncle Julius' strong hand caught me, and I was hurried back to the nursery.

With Uncle Felix as my earliest idol, Uncle Julius quickly became my next. He was the leading painter of his day in Austria, and the only one to be visited personally by the old Emperor Franz Joseph at his studio at 39 Alle-gasse—third floor and no lift.

The smells of oil and paint and canvas in that studio thrilled me, and when we went to Vienna I used to sit there for hour after hour. I admired my uncle's battle pictures tremendously, but what I really loved were his paintings of horses. I began to draw myself, and when Uncle Julius said "The boy has talent" my mother regretfully turned her back on previous visions of her son becoming a famous conductor and began to dream dreams of a new and even greater Leonardo da Vinci. But there were other plans afoot for me: I was six years old, and it was thought time for me to begin serious lessons.

I was taught first by an old retired German professor with a long white beard. His very first question was, "How much is one plus one?" I was sure of my ground here and proudly whipped back, "Eleven." It took quite a number of practical examples to make me understand that there is

an element of difference between adding two things together and placing them side by side. All the same, I am still convinced that I was right up to a point—I wonder what Einstein would say.

I soon got beyond the children's book stage, and then attacked my father's library, in spite of stern prohibition. I came across a bundle of paper-backs with bright jackets—*Nick Carter* and *Buffalo Bill*, the 'penny dreadfuls' of the day—with which my father sometimes used to amuse himself in the evening when he was very tired. They became my first friends, and I owe them a lot—my own love of excitement and suspense, my longing for adventure and travel. I spent wonderful hours with them, reading of their adventures by the light of an electric torch underneath the bedclothes; and they have been the direct cause of more than one sound thrashing when this was found out.

They were followed by a man who overshadowed them all, Karl May, who is scarcely known in England or America, but who wrote enthralling books about himself. He was his own hero, and I rode with him and his characters through the dark and bloodstained hunting grounds; I became the blood-brother of a young Apache chief; I learned that the Comanches were low-down skunks whose scalps were not worthy to be hung at one's belt; I shot lions and elephants in Africa; rode over the salt lakes and *sebkhas* of Algeria; and tracked desperate criminals far and wide through seven countries—all by the light of my little clandestine torch.

My father and mother might plan to turn me into a conductor or a painter, but there was only one plan in my own mind—to go out and look for adventure as Karl May had done. My family might tell me repeatedly, as indeed they did, that he was a liar who had never done one thousandth of the things he claimed, who had, in fact,

never left Germany all his life. I smiled politely at them, concealing my secret contempt and disbelief, and kept my faith in my hero bright and high in my heart. I modelled myself on him; I even learned all the Arabic and Red Indian words in his books by heart, and I still know them. I doubt if any of the words I learned of Sioux, Utah, or Apache will prove of much use to me, but the Arabic words most certainly have. They provided a very excellent standby when later on in life I actually did what I had planned to do as a child: when I set off to travel among far countries in search of real adventure.

I met with strong opposition from my family over my preoccupation with Karl May. He had a black horse, a gift from a sheik of the Shammar tribe. His name was Rih (Wind), and this horse and I became great friends. When he was shot by some devil of a Kurd I burst into such a violent storm of tears that the whole household came rushing into my room to see what was wrong.

"Rih is dead!" I sobbed. "Rih is dead!"

At first they thought I had gone mad; then that I had had a nightmare; but at last they found out the truth, and then Karl May really became anathema. Their opposition did no good, however, for I went on reading him secretly, and his world became more and more my own. To be fair to the vanquished; always to fight for the weak and oppressed; to punish arrogance and boasting; never to lose one's sense of humour, no matter how hard the circumstances—that was what Karl May taught, and I consider it no paltry creed.

My concern with this building up of my own private world took my attention off what was happening around me. One aspect, however, struck me: we were always moving into larger flats, and at last into a whole house. We had become rich—not that things had ever been particularly bad, but now we were really rich.

My father had gone into the mining business by this time, after a good many changes of profession. He had started off as an officer of the Hungarian Honved Hussars, one of the finest cavalry regiments in the world and beautifully turned out. I remember when I was six he had a uniform made for me which was the replica of his own: red trousers, blue hussar-jacket, fur-edged dolman, shako, and a silvery glittering sword which, though not really sharp, did very nicely for curtain fringes and tablecloths, and once did deadly work with my sister's pigtail before it was confiscated.

After serving as an officer my father became, surprisingly enough, a judge, and he often used to discuss with me the criminal cases over which he had presided. His severity was much dreaded, and indeed he did not look like a man who could be trifled with: I remember him at that time as standing six foot three, with keen, black eyes, and the then fashionable pointed black beard.

From legal affairs he turned to politics, and his activity quickly made a mark: I have still somewhere among my papers a caricature of him from a Hungarian paper in which he is shown as a giant attacking other politicians with an enormous club. His political articles were strong and trenchant, and his co-operation with Count Szögheny-Marich, then Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in Berlin, was so successful that he was granted a title by the Emperor. The fact that this title could be handed on to his descendants meant a lot to my father, for he had always been an extremely ambitious man. Born in the little Hungarian town of Losoncz (now in Czechoslovakian territory since the Treaty of Trianon), he had always set his eyes upon the heights, and it had long distressed him that he could bring no title to his marriage with my mother, herself a hereditary Baroness of Dreifus. Her family had at first considered her marriage with my father—young Hungarian

newspaper-man and politician—somewhat of a *mésalliance*, for they were influential and closely connected with the Court circle.

The Emperor Franz Joseph had many times stayed with my grandfather on his estate of Grueneck in the Alps for chamois and deer shooting, and had often been accompanied by the Empress Elisabeth. Her beauty always made a real sensation wherever she went, and she was in other respects a remarkable woman, having much in common with her cousin, Louis II of Bavaria, one of the strangest monarchs of all times. She rode like an Amazon, and sometimes gave regular circus-riding displays to her intimate friends. She could climb like a chamois, and the unfortunate ladies-in-waiting, who were obliged to follow her wherever she went, suffered agonies. Her wonderful hair, in which she could wrap herself as in a cloak, was regularly shampooed with the yolks of three hundred eggs.

My grandfather, Baron Dreifus, was a banker and in partnership with Baron Erlanger, doing a great deal of business with the Rothschilds. These business relations grew when my grandfather married a direct descendant of old Gudula Rothschild and thus made a family link. Other relations on my mother's side were the poet Heinrich Heine, Sir Harry Worms, at one time Lord Mayor of London, and my great-great-uncle Sir Julius Benedict, whose operas were performed at Covent Garden during the reign of Queen Victoria. An aunt of mine also married an Italian naval officer, Baron Carlo Novellis di Coarazze, who later became an admiral—a friendly little man with a long beard and a habit of falling asleep at odd moments if one did not keep a sharp look-out. His house in Venice was crammed with fine curios which he had collected in all parts of the world. He was in command of an Italian gunboat when the Boxer War broke out, and

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my aunt was given permission to accompany him to China. She was the first white woman to be granted an audience by the formidable old Tzu Hsi, last Empress of China, who is said to have ordered the murder of her own son when she discovered him not to be the obedient tool she had intended. I have seen the presents given at that audience to my aunt: rare silks the like of which never reach the market; precious little ivories; some of the Empress's own special tea. I have tasted the latter and frankly thought it rather unpleasant: maybe it is an acquired taste.

IV

We used to spend the winters in Berlin and the summers, from May till October, in Austria at my father's house in Alt-Aussee. The house was set among green meadows which in spring grew white with narcissi, and circling it were the mountains. My father made this his summer headquarters, and from here used to travel through Europe, buying and selling mines, founding and liquidating companies. Even during his political activities he had been interested in everything to do with mining and was always coming out with new and far-reaching projects: among other things he was one of the first to discover the importance of bauxite, the principal source of aluminium.

The peasants of the district looked up to him as the negroes of South Carolina must have looked up to a powerful but benevolent plantation owner, and they found him an open-handed, kindly master, but not one brooking contradiction easily and insolence not at all. He had fought thirteen duels, and with very few exceptions—whose scars I have seen on his body—his opponents had suffered severely. He was a splendid shot, an even better fencer, and was as strong as a bear—I did my first gymnastic exercises on the biceps of his right arm.

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I loved and admired him tremendously, but I think he was disappointed in me: I was too soft, too much of a book-worm. I still spent hours with my books, and though they were adventure books I am sure he felt that a real boy would be out fighting other boys, practising gymnastics, learning to ride instead. Riding lessons were a real torture to me, and I always seemed to get the oldest and tallest ex-army horses, three times as high as myself. The only thing that sent me up again and again on to their intolerably wide backs was the thought that one day I might own for myself an Arab thoroughbred like Rih.

One day I heard my father say to my mother, "I really think he'd make a much better girl. I don't know where he gets his softness from—not from you, and certainly not from me."

I thought that conversation over and came to the conclusion that it would actually be rather nice to have been a girl: they had much prettier clothes, they were not always having to have their hair cut—a particular abomination of mine—they were treated politely, and no one forced them to learn riding or gymnastics. Of course, they could not ride across Arabia, and they could not go and shoot lions: that was a definite snag. But the idea of becoming a girl instead of a conductor or a painter had considerable attractions, and I decided it was worth bearing in mind.

There is no doubt about it, I was rather at this time what the Americans call a 'sissy'—very proud of my fair complexion and my yellow curls. I enjoyed playing games with two girls of my own age, and this predilection distressed my mother, who was herself the very reverse of sissy, full of energy and fire, and one of the finest women cyclists of the day. As children she and her three sisters used to fight like boys, and there is a story told of an all-in wrestling match which my mother had with one of her

friends, a little princess of Bavaria. My mother won on a technical knock-out, flooring the young princess, who later became Queen Elizabeth of the Belgians.

I asked my father one day why a crane was engraved on our table silver, and he explained to me that the crane was part of our coat of arms.

"What is a coat of arms, Father?"

"It's what a knight has."

"And when is one a knight?"

"When the King says so."

"Are you a knight, Father?"

"Yes—and so are you, because you are my son."

I thought a bit.

"What exactly is a knight?"

The tall man with the black beard looked down at me.

"If one has done something for one's country one is rewarded by the King," he said slowly. "Sometimes it is a decoration, sometimes it is money. But the highest reward is to be ennobled. Actually one has been ennobled already by what one has done, but the conferring of a title makes this known to other people."

I thought this over carefully.

"But I—I haven't done anything yet. Why am *I* ennobled because *you* have done something?"

He smiled.

"That's a question even many grown-up people ask—and yet it's so simple. The King is honouring me in honouring my sons. We are not just isolated individuals—we are the sons of our fathers and the fathers of our sons. It is an endless chain. But the chief part of the answer to your question is this: knighthood is not only an honour—it is above all an obligation."

"For me too?" I asked very suspiciously.

My father nodded. His face was very serious.

"For you too. You are a knight. You must never forget

that. It binds you to many things. To loyalty to your King, and to knightly conduct in your own life."

"What ought a knight to do?"

"He must never do a mean or dishonourable thing. He must help the weak and the oppressed whenever he can. He must be proud, but never arrogant. And he must not be a coward."

"That is quite a lot," I thought.

"You will meet many men with titles in your life," said my father quietly. "Not all of them will think or act decently—and in that they do doubly wrong. You will meet men whose titles have been held by their families for hundreds of years, and you will find them very proud of that—and rightly so. But always remember that the important thing is to be noble of oneself and not only through one's name."

My father never spoke to me again of these things, but I have never forgotten his words. He was a newly created knight, but he lived a knightly life, noble from within himself, not only through his name.

So I was a knight. Straight away that put a stop to any ideas I had of turning into a girl: I was under a solemn obligation to fight for the weak and oppressed, and of course a girl could not do that. As a rule I did not like obligations, but this was a bit different: it linked me up with Karl May, who himself set out to protect the weak and the oppressed against bullies, hostile Red Indians, crooks, and evil-minded Bedouins. There was no doubt about it, Karl May was a knight, and it meant a lot to me to feel linked with him in this way.

I began a new life, turned my back on dolls and curls, and grievously disappointed my little friends Eva and Ruth.

But I was on man's business now and very serious about it. The holes in my clothes and the scratches on my arms and legs were only the first visible signs of my initiation as a knight. I was waiting for my real chance: I wanted to win my spurs. The legends of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table had given the final stimulus to my imagination: I saw myself as a kind of reincarnation of Sir Gawain, and roamed the neighbourhood in search of ogres and lady-snatching sorcerers.

It was summer in Steiermark when my chance came, and a fine day too, which is not always the same thing, for there the rain gets caught among the mountain-ringed valleys and cannot find its way out again. But when there is a fine day it is very lovely indeed.

My father was in his study with a business visitor from Budapest; my mother was having tea in the drawing-room with friends; my grammar, arithmetic, and French were over for the day—I was free. I buckled on my sword and set out in search of high adventure. I wandered first through meadows yellow with buttercups, blue with hyacinths and gentians; then through the deep forest. But I met with no knight-errant, no palfrey bearing on its back a kidnapped princess. One dragon I did meet, and him I finished off, although he was a very small dragon who would have answered to the name of 'slow-worm' if he had had ears to hear. Still, my sword was now blooded, and that was what my stern knightly soul craved.

I came to the edge of the lake and heard the far-off yodelling of the peasants, to my ears the war-cry of a savage tribe.

I passed by a pleasant little cottage with friendly green blinds. Suddenly I heard a cry—a woman's scream.

I stopped. It came again—and again.

A woman in distress. . . . The blood rushed to my head. I raced across the meadow towards the cottage.

The woman was screaming continuously now, and there was another voice too, the deep growling voice of a man.

I reached the whitewashed cottage and crept cautiously to the nearest window. It was open, and I saw a huge peasant with arms like a grizzly bent over something wearing petticoats and beating it mercilessly. Petticoats screamed desperately, struggled to escape; Petticoats had flying hair and a bleeding nose; Petticoats implored the Grizzly, "Stop—please stop. Let me go!" But the Grizzly just growled and went on beating.

I stood pressed against the window, only my eyes and nose above the sill. I was horribly afraid: afraid of the Grizzly, of the woman's screams, of having to interfere. For I knew that I had to put a stop to this. It was now or never. My knees were shaking, and a sort of leaden dumping was stuck in my throat; but I pulled myself together and scrambled on to the windowsill.

"Let her go!" I shouted, and my boy's voice sounded very thin even to my ears. "Let her go at once—do you hear me?"

But he did not hear me, and neither of them paid me any attention. The peasant went on hammering at the poor woman with his enormous fists.

I looked round, saw a big flowerpot, seized it, and threw it as hard as I could at the Grizzly's head. It found its mark all right and burst into a thousand pieces. The man staggered back with a yell, his forehead bleeding.

The petticoats were free now, and I saw that they belonged to a pretty thirty-year-old peasant woman.

"Jesus," she stammered. "What has happened to you, Xavier? You are bleeding——"

The man fell groaning into the nearest chair.

"Some one threw something at me," he wailed. "My head's singing like a hive of bees. O-oh——"

Then the woman caught sight of me, and her pretty face grew wild and furious. I sat on my windowsill, stunned and dumbfounded, as she came towards me raging, her brawny arms akimbo.

"You little bastard!" She spat the words at me. "What's the idea of this—eh?"

"B-but——" I gave a big swallow. "But he was b-beating you, wasn't he? He——"

"My Xavier is my husband, I'll have you know. He can beat me as much as he likes, and I don't want any lousy son of a bitch interfering, see?"

Crack! I got the flat of her open hand slap into my face, and that woman's hands were about as big as her husband's.

"And you've smashed the flowerpot," went on the freed princess in fresh outburst of rage. "That'll be three crowns fifty, see?"

That was the last straw—the princess demanding money for the wounded dragon. The whole world had gone topsy-turvy: my head began to spin.

"Good-bye," I gasped. Then I jumped down from the windowsill and ran as fast as I could across the meadows into the forest, the princess's bellowings ringing in my ears for quite a distance. I ran through that forest as one runs in a nightmare: all my ideas about life in general and knightly deeds in particular had tumbled round me like a pack of cards. All I wanted to do was to get home.

I arrived just as my mother's guests were leaving.

"What on earth has happened to you?" My mother was genuinely frightened. "Where have you been? You look awful."

I pressed a hand against my swollen cheek.

"I've had a fight," I said, and walked into the house. I could hear them laughing, which annoyed me.

I went up to my room, offended with the whole world and everything in it. Being a knight was quite impossible if princesses and dragons did not stick to the rules. Still, it had been an adventure, and adventures ought to be recorded.

I got a pencil and paper and started writing it down. "Sir Louis' First Knightly Deed" was the title; the peasant was a giant with at least sixteen arms, and the peasant woman was enchantingly beautiful, but guilty of the direst ingratitude to her brave rescuer.

At nine o'clock that night, long after I was in bed and officially asleep, my mother found this first literary effort on the table when she and my father came in for a last look at me. She read it through and passed it to my father, who tried hard to subdue his chuckles so as not to wake me up.

"Don Quixote," was his verdict. "The boy has plagiarized Cervantes. Still, it's pretty good for six years old. Perhaps he'll turn out a writer."

"Goodness, I hope not," said my mother anxiously. Writers, for her, were starvelings at so many pence per line, or theatrical hangers-on who prostituted their souls by writing plays for the stage. Some were even revolutionaries. But nearly all of them died in grotesque misery.

"He's got talent, all right." My father shook his head in some regret. "I can't help it—he's got talent. And he *will* write one day."

I felt tremendously happy under the bedclothes.

The very next day I started on a lavish drama, *Jesus of Nazareth*. The great speech of the High Priest Caiaphas in the market-place of Jerusalem bore a strong resemblance to Mark Antony's speech in *Julius Cæsar*—I had read that and *Coriolanus* quite recently—and Caiaphas praised Christ in the same hypocritical way that Mark Antony praised Brutus, to convince his audience of the contrary.

I FOLLOW MY STARS

Plagiarism or not, I was very much in earnest about my drama: I decided to compose the music for it myself, paint the posters, and design the scenery, and of course I myself would play one of the leading parts—Caiaphas perhaps, or Mary Magdalene.

CHAPTER II

TIME OF STRAIN

The uncanny enters my life—My father's death—The War—
Aunt Feo volunteers—Revolution.

EARLY in 1914 the uncanny entered my life for the first time. I was eleven years old then, rather highly strung, and much given to day-dreaming.

One day my father took us to see the new house he had just bought in Steglitz, the Hampstead of Berlin. He was very proud of this, the first house of his own: he was at that time in the thick of the biggest projects of his whole career, and a huge mining company was being formed whose interests were to cover the whole of Europe.

He was eager and excited as he let us into the house, and so were we children. My mother had seen it before, but to my sister Erzsi—short for Elizabeth and pronounced Erjee—and myself it was all quite new. Erzsi ran from room to room shouting with excitement.

I crossed the big hall slowly. A rather steep staircase led up to the floor above. At the foot of that staircase I stopped and stared in front of me. It was the most extraordinary thing I have ever felt: my legs seemed to be filled with lead. I was weighted there and could not move. Could not move. . . .

My mother had already gone upstairs.

"Why don't you come up?" she called. "Don't you want to see your bedroom?"

I wanted to answer, but I could not. My voice was gone.

"What is the matter with you?"

My mother's voice was sharp; then she came and looked down at me.

"Are you feeling ill? You've gone quite white."

Again I wanted to answer, and again I could not get a single word out. I had never felt this sort of thing before except in my very worst nightmares, in those nightmares when I was being chased by something terrible and I was trying to get away and I could not run and the terrible Thing caught me and swallowed me up and I woke shrieking and in a cold sweat of fear. But this time I was not asleep. I was awake, wide awake; and it was a bright, sunny morning. . . .

Suddenly I burst into tears. My mother ran down and took my hand. It was icy cold.

"Are you ill, darling?" she asked anxiously.

I shook my head, but when she tried to lead me up the stairs I fought to be free and shrank backwards until the wall behind me brought me to a full stop.

My father came out of the library and asked what was wrong.

"He is afraid of the staircase—he jibs like a horse," said my mother.

My father looked at me.

"Any special reason?" he asked quietly.

I shook my head.

"Then you must fight it."

He took a firm hold of my arm and led me straight up the stairs. I pressed up very close against him, and suddenly I was all right. Five minutes later I had forgotten all about it.

While we lived in that house I must have run up and down those stairs, slid down those banisters, a thousand times, and never once did I feel again that ghastly paralysis of fear which had so shaken me that day. My father, as well as my mother, tried later on to find out the reason

for my strange behaviour, but I had no answer to their questions and only looked in distress at them. I did not want to talk about it: there was no knowing what could happen if one suddenly had nightmare terrors when one was wide awake.

II

I was at a real school now. Up till then private tutors had taught me everything about Cæsar's *De Bello Gallico* (successfully) and something about mathematics (without any success at all). I did not like that school a bit: hundreds of noisy, shouting boys looking down on me because I had had private tutoring. I decided to keep myself to myself, and so succeeded in getting very thoroughly disliked. And, as a matter of fact, I must have been pretty awful, for I remember how on the mornings when I turned up late—Steglitz was so far away that I had to be up by six in order to be in school at eight—I used to smile apologetically like a *débutante* late for a dinner party and slip into my seat with a polite little murmur. And no pack of schoolboys will stand for that.

Summer came suddenly that year, and I began to love the Steglitz house. There were all sorts of flowers in the garden; one could lie on the green grass dreaming dreams into the blue sky. And not even the road to school was ugly any more.

I was happy that morning, I remember, as I came downstairs and crossed the hall ready to go off to school: it was only half-past seven, so for once I was not going to be late.

Suddenly the library door was flung open, and my father rushed out. He was deadly pale, I saw, as he ran to the staircase and began to mount the stairs. Half-way up he stopped, staggered, and pressed one hand against his heart, groaning.

I stood at the front door and stared at him. He stumbled to his knees, dragged himself up again and went on climbing the stairs, calling my mother's name all the time. His voice was hoarse and choked.

My mother came out of her bedroom, put her arm round him without a word, and led him in. I stood on where I was, not moving at all, staring, staring at the empty staircase. Could it all have been a dream again? I went slowly up the stairs and sat down outside my mother's door and waited.

She came out after a while, very pale but, as always in an emergency, calm and cool.

"He is better now," she said in a quiet voice. "Hurry up, or you will be late for school."

I nodded without a word and went, and the whole way to school I stared and stared at that terrifying staircase. It stayed with me all morning, so that I forgot even to apologize for arriving late and earned a black mark. This was ordinarily something to be dreaded, but that morning I did not even notice it. The staircase, I thought, the staircase. . . . It seemed as though the morning would never end, that half-past one would never come.

By the time I got home the doctor, of course, had long been and gone. A little heart-attack, he had said—nothing to worry about, no danger at all—good heavens, no—no cause for anxiety. A nice rest in bed—that was all the patient needed. He would look in again to-morrow, though it wasn't really necessary, but if it made the patient feel happier, well, why not?

Erzsi and I were told we might go into my father's room and see him. He was still pale and tired-looking, but seemed quite cheerful. We only stayed five minutes with him and then went out. I remember what a lovely day it was, hot and cloudless.

We went to bed at eight o'clock, but I could not sleep.

I tossed and turned from one side to the other. I heard the church clock strike near by: nine o'clock.

Then suddenly some one hurried along the passage past my door. I heard a lot of whispering, and then a strange and very clear voice saying, "Dead."

I was shivering; I wanted to get up, to run to my father's room, but my limbs had grown as heavy as stone. . . . Voices, voices . . . steps, voices again . . . the staircase. It was the staircase's fault—I knew it. . . . Dead? Not my father. That was impossible. *That* could not be true. I was dreaming. . . .

I woke up with a terrible headache, my eyes burning. Something awful had happened: but what? I washed and dressed. Anny—now Erzsi's governess—came in and called us to breakfast. She was very pale, and her eyes were red, but she said nothing. We had breakfast alone, and we did not even dare to talk to each other.

Suddenly the door opened and Aunt Feo—Uncle Felix's wife and our favourite aunt—came in. As she lived in Munich her visit was a fine surprise, and we hugged and kissed her excitedly. But she was very grave and serious and held us closely to her. Then she said, "I have got to tell you something very, very painful."

"Father!" I said quickly. Then my breath was gone again.

She nodded.

"He—he is worse?"

She nodded again.

"Much worse?"

When her voice came it was very low.

"He is dead."

Erzsi burst into tears, but I could not cry. I only felt tired out and utterly exhausted. I nodded and went out, straight up to my father's room, where I found Anny waiting at the door.

She came up to me.

"The last time you saw him he was happy," she said. "Don't go in."

I stood there without moving, unable even to think.

Later on some one took us into the library, where my mother was, still only partly dressed, a coat thrown loosely across her shoulders, her hair still down, broken with grief. We had never before seen her like that: she was always most particular and tidy in the minutest details of her dress, her lovely crown of hair unruffled always. This sudden difference brought it home to us that a great and terrible change had taken place, and we ran crying to her, burying our heads in her lap.

Only when I got to my feet again did I see that the room was full of people wearing black with grave, sad faces. The first to shake hands with me was the old German professor, my first tutor; then the doctor; then another doctor. I shook hands with them mechanically. Then suddenly I knew that my father would have wished me to be calm and dignified—I was the only man in the family now. I stopped crying and looked straight into their eyes.

It was all the fault of the staircase: I am still firmly convinced of that to this day. Probably the first heart-attack in the library had brought with it the typical state of fear. That fear had made my father rush up the steep stairs, and the effort had been too much for his heart. The second attack in the evening had found him without reserves of strength, and so he died. And with him died so much. . . .

There was nothing now to keep us in Berlin: we were in mourning, and anyhow my mother had always disliked the Berlin set. They were mostly exceedingly rich, and, with a few notable exceptions, were an unpleasant crowd, hard, materialistic, and much given to boasting of their wealth.

My mother longed for the country where she had been brought up: Bavaria, the Bavarian Alps, the gentian-blue lakes, the pine forests and mountains, and the rough, simple dialect of the peasants. So we went to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, at the very foot of Germany's highest mountain, the Zugspitze. Here was peace and quietude, fresh air and sunshine.

III

Then that happened which many people had for a long time foreseen: the War broke out.

Even our quiet little household in Garmisch-Partenkirchen was caught up in that frenzied excitement, even I myself. I was a Hungarian, the son of a Hungarian cavalry officer; the Germans were our allies; they had the best infantry in the world, we the best cavalry and heavy artillery. We were bound to win.

My uncle Carlo Novellis was staying with us, and as an admiral in the Italian navy found himself in a strategically difficult position. Was Italy going to fight side by side with the Central Powers or not? He was no diplomat, simply a sailor and a great gentleman; all he could do was to grouse at the complexities of the situation, and that he did wholeheartedly out of the abundant arsenal of the Italian language.

My cousins, Louis and Charles von Blaas, were Austrian officers; they had to go at once. Friends telephoned from Munich: they had news that the Russians had crossed the German frontier; that several French Army corps were massed in Belgium; that . . . that . . . that . . . They had their news direct from the Bavarian War Office, they said. Every one seemed suddenly to have the closest connexions with the War Office, with the Royal Palace in Munich, with the Imperial Palace in Berlin. And every second person was a spy.

Bands of reservists marched along the streets, sun-tanned Bavarian peasants. Their shirts were unbuttoned right down to their chests, their hats were pushed back to the very napes of their necks, and the girls had garlanded them with flowers—gentians and alpine roses. They were singing in rough voices, and yet it sounded beautiful.

I stood in the doorway—eleven years old—and looked at them. Why wasn't I a couple of years older? At seventeen they would take me—perhaps even at sixteen. These men were beautiful with their fiery eyes and their movements full of quiet strength. But the flowers on their hats reminded me of the victims of the ancient Greeks, traditionally decorated with ribbons and flowers before the slaughter.

I checked the thought furiously, and turned back into the house, where the waves of patriotic excitement rode sky high. Everything looked so simple: Serbian murderers had killed the Austro-Hungarian heir to the throne, and when Austria turned to punish Serbia the latter's accomplices had interfered. Each one of them had her own particular reason for doing so: Russia wanted to protect Pan-Slavian interests and to control Stamboul and the Dardanelles; France wanted the return of Alsace-Lorraine and five milliards in gold; and England wanted to get rid of her most dangerous trade rival. It was all as clear as daylight.

I did not understand all this, of course. All I knew was that there was war and that it would not be easy for Hungary, Germany, and Austria to win—with my father not alive to fight for them. It was much the same thing to me as if the Greek army had tried to give battle to the Trojans without Achilles.

Outside the house the marching reservists were singing, "At home—at home we shall meet again. . . ."

IV

The days that followed were a chain of frantic, wild rejoicings. Liège fell, then Namur. Victory followed victory: in a fortnight the Germans would be in Paris. And all the Russians had been able to do in the East was to burn a few miserable little villages near the frontier—until it became evident that the Russians had done more. The Chief of Staff had to transfer two army corps from the Western to the Eastern front, where they won the greatest German victory of the whole war. But in winning they brought the final decisive defeat, for the Germans lacked troops now on the Western front, and the disastrous battle of the Marne put a stop to their offensive.

From then on the war became chronic, a state rather than a movement, and in twelve months' time it seemed impossible that any other news could ever have filled the papers in the far-off days of peace.

Another member of our family who had volunteered for active service on the outbreak of war was my Aunt Feo, who had begun to study medicine after her divorce from Felix von Weingartner. She had taken her degree *summa cum laude* in record time, and was practising as a specialist in children's diseases in Munich when the war broke out. She applied at once to the Bavarian army, but women doctors were not eligible for military service in Germany, so she went to the Austrians, and a week later travelled south-east to the Serbian frontier with an ambulance train.

She found things in a terrible state: they were short staffed, lacking supplies of vital drugs and dressings, hampered by utterly inefficient doctors. One of these latter actually fainted at an operation he was attending, and apologized with the explanation that he had never been able to stand the sight of blood.

Aunt Feo did the work of three until she picked up some serious infection and was forced to come home. Later she continued to practise in Munich, treating thousands of children—the poor ones for nothing. She died of a rare and terrible disease in 1932, three months before the coming of Hitler and the Third Reich. Had she been alive then Feodora von Weingartner, hereditary Baroness of Dreifus, would have been forbidden to practise. She would have become a second-class citizen, dubbed ‘non-German’: she was ‘non-Aryan.’

The World War went on, disrupting by its echoes even the peace of Garmisch-Partenkirchen’s woods and gentian meadows, the even tenor of our quiet life. My mother had much complicated business to attend to connected with the liquidations of my father’s affairs, and she was helped in this by many of his friends. The huge bauxite mines were sold, and the money from their sale invested patriotically in Austro-Hungarian War Loan. Everything that could be so handed over was needed by the State: all gold was requisitioned, even to watches and gold rings.

We moved back to Berlin, and I returned to the same school as before. Of the masters there only those with white hair remained: the others were in France, in Belgium, in Russia, in Serbia, in Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Turkey, or on the high seas. They had been replaced by old and long-retired professors or by well-meaning ladies who must have had many shocks in dealing with an unruly pack of fifteen-year-old boys. Chair seats were studded with needles, stink bombs exploded continuously, student songs were sung in rioting chorus: it was a miracle we learned anything at all.

Life in Germany became steadily more harsh as the worst enemy of the Central Powers—hunger—became more and more powerful. For a long time bread had been rationed to one loaf per week per head; butter had entirely disappeared, and so had sugar and meat; only newborn babies were allowed milk. Everything had to go to the army on which everything depended. During the winter of 1917 sixty million people lived almost entirely on turnip-rooted cabbage and an abominable sort of artificial fat which tasted like nothing on earth. People used to make secret alliances with peasants and farmers so that for twenty times the real value they could buy little parcels containing meat, sausages, or, with a bit of luck, even a scrap of butter. The tea we drank was quite unworthy of the name: there was not a single tea-leaf in it. Coffee was made out of acorns. The bakers produced some sort of cake, the recipe for which was a closely guarded secret. It was sweetened with saccharin—later with saccharin substitute—and on top was a whitish sort of paste which looked like whipped cream and was usually called ‘horse-foam.’ The nourishment of those lean years created the chemical composition of an entire generation, which may account for a good deal.

But still the war went on. All the belligerent nations had long silenced the type of propaganda which rams down people’s throats that the enemy is a nation of cowards, badly armed and badly led. Opponent recognized opponent’s worth with a reasonable degree of fairness; for the reverse attitude would lessen the value of their army in the eyes of the people. They would not readily understand how war could last so long unless it was that their own army was matched against a worthy foe.

Yet it was not until twelve years later, when I came to England for the first time in my life, that I was able to see for myself what a colossal task had been undertaken by the

Central Powers in the Great War, and what an adversary England is with the inexhaustible reserves of her Empire, the stubborn perseverance of her population, and her fleet. A first-rate soldier is hidden in every Englishman—and sleeps. He does not like to be awakened, but once he has been roused—once wide awake and really angry—he can be got back to bed again only after the victory has been won.

VI

We fifteen-year-olds were already being drilled for active service. Companies were formed, uniformed, and trained. I shared this training, although I had decided to join a Hungarian regiment when my time came, if possible my father's regiment. In two years that would be—perhaps only in one, for no one thought then that the war could possibly be over so soon: we had forgotten even that there could be such a thing as peace.

Prussia's great soldier Clausewitz called war "the father of all things," thus confusing the teacher with the rod of correction. Napoleon called war "a question of the stomach," and Germany proved Napoleon right. The stomach struck, and a wave of poisonous feeling swept the length and breadth of Germany, nourished by Moscow. One day when I was walking to school I saw long black columns of men stalking the streets—hollow-cheeked, pale-faced men with gleaming eyes. They were moving towards the Imperial Palace.

The revolution had come.

CHAPTER III •

TIME OF GROWTH

“Go and get strong!”—The bullies are defeated—Schoolboy revolutionary—I become a bank clerk—The period of inflation and degeneracy—Young bulls in Oberammergau—The peasant girl, a legend, and a curious dream.

IN a terrible matter-of-fact way life went on. Only very few people realized just how much had been smashed on that 9th of November, 1918. It was not even possible to realize fully: only the Armistice conditions were known, nothing of the peace proposals. All that could be understood was that this was an interim between two eras and that it would pass; all people could do was to live according to that. Everything was ‘for the moment,’ ‘for the next two months.’

The Socialists—most of whom had probably never expected to do more than form the Opposition—were suddenly faced with the monumental task of creating the German Republic. It was a new experience for them to have to create when they had themselves been created but to criticize, and what they did ‘create’ was a kind of compromise, not any more a monarchy, but certainly not a republic. My own school gave an excellent example of this compromise. It had always been the “Royal Prince Henry Gymnasium”; now the word ‘Royal’ was replaced by the word ‘Public’—that was the only change made—and the result was that the school still remained named after Prince Henry, the ex-Emperor’s brother.

So far, beyond the changing of my school’s name, the new order of things had not affected me. I had reached the third highest form, and in another two years would be finished with school and able to start my training as a

conductor or a painter, for neither of these two ambitions had as yet disappeared from my horizon. Then something happened which was to change my whole life.

At sixteen I was, unlike the other boys in my form, a thin-skinned and sensitive dreamer. Even the training corps had not altered that. My free time was still spent in reading, listening to opera, or going to concerts. I was nearly always alone, for I had made no friends. The other boys concentrated on games, went to the six-day races, and embarked on their first love affairs. They could not make me out, and they nicknamed me "the girl," because they knew I hated it. My shyness fired their contempt, my sensitiveness incited them to the crudest practical joking, and it was a very unhappy time for me. It became plain hell, though, with the entry into my form of Heinz Sindloff, newly expelled for excellent reasons from his previous school.

He was seventeen, tall for his age, and very strong, with a brutish face and ugly red hands, and he made a dead set against me with two others—Gehrmann and Henning—who had never been able to stand the sight of me. Every day between the second and third classes these three would set on me: sneers first, then a slap in the face, then a thrashing. If a master came by they always managed to laugh and pretend it was all a game, and I did not dare to contradict them. The moment the master's back was turned they would thrash me till I could not walk. I had done nothing to them: they *enjoyed* bullying me, and when they finally reduced me to desperate tears their sadistic pleasure was complete.

I did not put up any sort of resistance: it would have been useless, for I was one of the weakest, if not the very weakest, of my year. One or two of the others tried to talk the Three out of their odd type of humour, but without success, and their good nature did not go so far as to defend

me by a show of force. The Three were not people to make enemies of, Sindloff's strength in particular being notorious.

This state of things went on for weeks and weeks. It kept me awake at night, and when at last I was forced to sleep I dreamed of what would come between the second and third lessons in the morning. Always when the bell rang for the interval at half-past ten I went dead white and could not stop shivering. Always I longed that just for once, just for to-day, they would not come. But they always came, and they always invented new and more enticing punishment. I tried staying in the classroom instead of going out to the main courtyard; but they just thrashed me in the classroom. I tried hiding; but they always found me. If there is a hell on earth, then that was mine.

One day, when I went back into the classroom after the interval exhausted and bruised by their heavy fists, a boy belonging to another form came up to me.

"Look here," he said, "I've been watching this going on for ages. Why in heaven's name do you put up with it?"

I tried to make him understand.

"What can I do? They're three to one, and all of them so much stronger than I am."

He gave me a quick glance and shook his head.

"You *are* a girl all right," he said impatiently. "*Do* something. If you're not strong—well, go and *get* strong!"

That settled it for him, and he walked off to his class, but it by no means settled it for me. "*Do* something. Go and *get* strong!" went round and round in my head till I could think of nothing else. I knew he was right, and that I had to do something; the only question was what.

On my way to school every day I had to pass a boxing

gymnasium, one of the very first to be started in Germany. Before the War there had practically been no such thing as boxing, and German soldiers received their first lessons from British Tommies in the English prison camps. All the German champions of the early post-War years—Hirschberger, Naujocks, Spoerl, Prenzel, Wiegert, Breitenstraeter—started in prison camps.

I never passed that boxing gymnasium without a shudder. I often saw big, broad-shouldered men with battered faces going in and out; sometimes I heard thunderous sounds. It was a rough and terrible place to me. Even on the day I made my decision I stood outside for quite a while to summon up all the courage I could. Then I walked in.

A sturdy little man in a once-white sweater came up and looked at me suspiciously. His nose had been broken more than once, and he had cauliflower ears.

"Whatchawant?" he bellowed.

I took a deep breath.

"I want to have boxing lessons."

Laughter, shrill like the neighing of a horse, broke out from a corner of the room. Two young giants, in trunks and gloves, were standing there looking at me, and they laughed and laughed and laughed.

The man in the sweater only grinned.

"But you're a girl, my boy," he said with a sort of good-natured rudeness. "You'd better go home and dress yourself in skirts."

The giants roared, and I blushed all over and slunk away. "Go and *get* strong," the boy from the other class had said. "Go and *get* strong."

I got home, went up to my room. By my bed was a little table with a marble top. I took the top off—it weighed just over twelve pounds—and lifted it up. Once, twice, three times I lifted it; then I had to stop, for my

breath was gone. But after a minute I began again, and this time I did not stop until I had lifted it fifteen times.

I repeated the exercise before going to bed, and it was the first thing I did the next morning before breakfast. From then on I did it regularly, following a timetable I had worked out: the first four days fifteen times in the morning, fifteen times after getting back from school, and fifteen times before going to bed; the next four days twenty times; then thirty. After four weeks I had reached the hundred mark, and I stayed at that: already my muscles hardened when I flexed my arms.

After six weeks of this I went back to the gymnasium.

"Will you take me now, sir?" I asked the man in the white sweater.

He looked at me rather curiously, and must have seen a certain change in me, for this time he said, "Take yer coat and shirt off, will yer?"

I stripped, and he had a good look at me.

"Humph," he said. "Whatcha been doin' to yerself?"

I told him the whole story: of the Three in school who thrashed me every day, of my decision to get strong, and of the marble table-top.

"Humph," he said again, his face expressionless. "All right, boy. Y'can start right now if y'like."

If I liked!

He started me off with the rudiments: to stand, to walk, to hold my arms correctly; rope work, club work. Then I was introduced to the ball.

"That's not a ball," said the man in the white sweater. "That's a bloke what can hit back, see? So don't you hit him without guarding yerself."

Pear work, sand-bag work, rowing on a machine, shadow boxing: I sweated, I panted, I worked like a coal-heaver, and after a fortnight he let me go into the ring

for the first time with himself as sparring partner. When I got my first straight left on my nose I thought I was going to die. But I did not: I took my second too. The third I countered, and my instructor grinned.

From then on progress was faster than before. I learned how to block the other man's punch, I side-stepped, countered, and made the acquaintance of my favourite blow, the uppercut. I was taught how to land a short dry hook and to avoid 'hay-makers.' I got accustomed to a quick jab on the liver that my instructor was particularly fond of, and I trained a 'one-two' blow. I took terrific punishment from a professional middleweight who was training for a fight in the Busch Circus and would take on anyone willing to enter the ring with him. I grew stronger and stronger every day.

And all the time the Three went on thrashing me every day, *and I let them do it* without putting up any show of resistance. I knew I could batter at least one of them to a standstill, but one was no good. I waited; it was not as hard a thing to do as it sounds, for they were not able to hurt me much any longer. I was used to so much harder blows.

I turned up at the gymnasium every day after school: two rounds of rope work, two rounds with the punching ball and sand-bag, and three rounds of sparring was my daily routine. After six weeks of training I at last managed to knock out my regular partner, an eighteen-year-old baker's apprentice—with eight-ounce gloves. When I saw him out I knew—*now!* I was ready at last, and I could hardly wait for the next day.

The next day came. The first and second lessons seemed to be twice as long as usual, but at last came the bell—so greatly dreaded for so many months. And that day too I was afraid, perhaps more than ever before: but this time I was afraid that they might *not* come.

TIME OF GROWTH

I went down to the main courtyard. Up came Gehrmann.

"Hullo, little girl," he said. "You're just in time. Sindloff says he wants to give you a singing lesson."

"He'll do nothing of the sort."

My voice was quiet and cool. Gehrmann stared.

"Have you gone raving mad?" He turned and shouted, "Sindloff—Sindloff, come here, will you? The girl's getting fresh!"

Sindloff appeared at once, and with him the inevitable Henning.

"Getting fresh, eh?" he said incredulously. "Well, if that's not the limit! You'll apologize at once, my girl, see?"

I looked at them. I had wanted to say a few things before I started in on them, but Sindloff did not wait: he just hit. I blocked his blow easily, felt a surge of overwhelming joy, and gave him a straight left to the stomach which sent him staggering. To this day I can see the look on his face: it was not pain so much as surprise. He was flabbergasted.

Henning screamed, "Damn your insolence!" and went for my throat. My uppercut cost him two front teeth. And then I just hit wherever I could see a chin, a nose, or a stomach; the few blows I took meant nothing to me. My arms had become weapons, hard-hitting weapons. Henning, crying on the ground, held his hands pressed to his mouth; Gehrmann's nose was bleeding beautifully. ("The main thing is the straight left—again and again. That's the very soul of boxing," the man in the white sweater had said.)

Neither Gehrmann nor Sindloff was thinking about singing lessons now: they wanted to get away, but they could not. Every single person in the courtyard, from kindergarten babies to eighteen-year-old 'men,' had gathered

round us, making a ring and shouting with excitement. I suddenly found I had dozens of friends to cheer me passionately, for the Three's arrogant behaviour had long made them disliked. To see them soundly thrashed—one to three, and that one "the girl," the last person in the world of whom it could have been expected—roused popular enthusiasm to fever heat.

Every man who has fought in the ring knows how important it is to have the public on his side: the other man then fights against hundreds. I doubled the speed of my attacks. Gehrman took a quick one-two blow on his chin and a juicy short hook to the stomach. He went down groaning. Only Sindloff was left: the biggest and strongest of them all, and, moreover, the man to whom I owed all those months of cruel bullying. He was pale and excited, but he was not done in any way. He was no fool either: he had not only seen that I had become a different person, he had realized that I had been having boxing lessons. He knew nothing about boxing, but he was bigger and heavier than I and, even as I then was, fully as strong.

He did the cleverest thing he could have chosen: he rushed in and clinched with me. For a minute or two we wrestled, silently and grimly; then I got my left hand free for a second and had a chance to land an uppercut. He jerked his head aside, so that the blow, instead of landing on his chin, got him full in the mouth. It began to pour with blood; his grip weakened, and I was able to land a right on the point of his chin. I shall never forget seeing him crash down and stay down.

"One," I gasped, "two—three——"

"Four——" Twenty, fifty, a hundred voices roared the count. "Five—six—seven——"

It was the greatest moment I had ever known: I still could hardly believe it.

"Eight," roared the boys. "Nine—ten!"

And then they yelled excitement like a tribe of Red Indians until Professor Meinhardt came out to see what it was all about. We melted away, while a dozen helping hands pulled the Three to their feet, and a dozen bodies hid them from the master's eyes. Sindloff could not walk at all; he staggered like a drunken man, and I saw in the eyes of the boys around me something I had never met before—admiration.

Professor Meinhardt pattered round, asking again and again, "What has been going on? Will you tell me what has been going on, or won't you?" But the boys nearest him just put on vacant faces and knew nothing about anything, while the others never even answered. Squealing was an unheard-of thing: even I had never considered it through all those past months.

Then the bell went, and the next lesson started. The Three sat with down-bent heads, Henning with his hand up to his mouth to hide the fact that two front teeth were gone. Gehrman was very white, and he was sick later in the morning, while Sindloff went home after the lesson, for his face was badly swollen. Dear old Dr Redlich asked them what in the world they had been doing, and they muttered something about "having run up against something." The old man shook his head, but he did not ask any more questions.

In the next interval I wandered about like a cross between Achilles and Ajax, respectful looks following me. Some of the boys asked where I had learned to box, but I only told them how short a time I had been training. Then I saw Peter Secklmann, the boy whose words had made the whole thing possible. I went over and shook his hand.

"Thanks," I said.

He understood and grinned.

I FOLLOW MY STARS

"I saw. It was a good show—very good. Wish you'd tell me the whole story."

I told him.

"Damn' good work," he said with satisfaction. "Let's walk home together after school."

So began a friendship which has lasted through the rest of our lives.

II

The morning after my victory over the Three little Siemburg came up to me.

"I say, girl, have you done your French prep? What does *clandestin* mean?"

"Half a sec.," I said, loudly enough for every one in the room to hear. "If anyone ever says 'girl' to me again they're going to get a damned good licking, see?"

There was silence: Gehrmann, Henning, and Sindloff turned their heads away.

"I'm—I'm sorry," stammered little Siemburg. "I—I didn't mean anything, you know——"

I cut him short.

"And *clandestin* means 'secret.' "

I never heard that nickname again: not even when, at the request of our literature master, I played the woman's lead in our school performance of Hebbel's *Nibelungen*, the last part of the trilogy. I was Kriemhild, Siegfried's widow, now married to Etzel (Attila), King of the Huns, played by the smallest and most bow-legged boy in our form, who had a providential lisp and was therefore cut out for the part.

I wore a long black dress with a train, over which all the cast tripped continually, not excluding myself. The one redeeming feature of having to be a woman among all those famous heroes was a scene towards the very end: "Kriemhild kills Hagen with his own sword." I hit poor

Hagen so vigorously over his helmet that the wretched thing was crushed right down over his ears and nose, and it took two of us more than half an hour to get him out again.

Among the eight hundred members of our audience there was one in particular, a very pretty girl, with big brown eyes and an attractively tip-tilted nose. She had come to our show almost by accident, having been invited by a friend of hers who was one of our old boys. She had only accepted his invitation because she did not want to hurt his feelings, and would by far have preferred to hear the concert given in the Opera by the Philharmonic Orchestra, for which she already had tickets. This was the girl I later married.

I was not introduced to her that evening—in fact, I did not see her there, and only actually met her several years later at a party. But it so happened that her first view of her future husband was unusual, to say the least of it: my face had been thickly powdered, my eyes deeply mascaraed, my mouth painted a fiery red, and I was wearing a fiery red wig and a trailing black dress with a long train, so that when I did meet her I had quite a lot to live down.

Our performance, however, was a roaring success, in spite of the fact that my 'husband' did at last, after several fruitless efforts, succeed in stamping my train right off. The fact that the Royal Palace of the Huns refused to burn—as was intended—did not damp the audience's enthusiasm, and they even went so far as to cheer to the echo a fallen hero who, bored with lying dead so long, rose cheerfully and walked away to the wings. It was all such a success that a repeat performance was arranged to take place a week later.

III

At that time the internal political situation in Germany was rather serious. The Government was made up chiefly of Social Democrats and was backed by the majority of the workers and a part of the *bourgeoisie*. But a large section of the workers had come under Communist influence and were being supported by the Third International Committee in Moscow, which poured money and political agents into Germany. Minor revolutions kept flaring up here and there, and the police were powerless, so that the Government had to send regular troops, the Reichswehr.

The Reichswehr was weak at that time, and knew it. Only a very small percentage of the many German families whose sons traditionally became army officers could now send them, for Germany was not allowed to have more than a hundred thousand men in the Army, including officers and N.C.O.s. So it came about that these young men, and with them many others, started to found all sorts of private clubs, groups, and 'free corps,' ready for use in emergency. But at that time no one knew who would arise to lead them.

It was obvious that war between these men and the Communists must come eventually, and so it did. It was a more or less subterranean war, but it lasted until 1933, that is to say, for fourteen years. Both sides had hidden arms: guns, automatics, rifles, machine-guns, and even armoured cars. There were ambushes and attacks, riots and real battles.

Many of the sons of the best German families fought among the ranks of the national organizations. They were not over-keen to defend the Social Democrat Government, but felt that anything would be better than Communism. The number of members grew daily: each organization was

anxious to attract young men of the type whose family would be a guarantee of patriotic fervour. They attracted a large number of students, and even mere schoolboys of good social position came forward to join.

One of these was my friend Peter. He did not speak of it to me, partly because our friendship was still a very new one, and partly because I was a Hungarian; but I had noticed one or two things on my own.

On the day of our second performance of *Nibelungen*, I remember, a certain senior boy was called to the telephone. He came back after a few minutes and asked the master if he could speak privately with him. When they got outside the classroom the boy said, "There is an alarm. Can I tell the other members in the school and go?"

Master and boy looked at each other.

"Of course," the man said slowly.

The boy turned abruptly and ran to the other classrooms, collecting some dozen or so members. A minute or two later, during the interval, I saw Peter leaving, and went up and stopped him.

"What's up?" I asked.

"A lot."

"An alarm?"

He looked blank.

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean."

He grinned.

"All right then—yes."

"Can I come with you?" I asked breathlessly.

He shook his head.

"Not to-day—but I'm afraid there'll be plenty of other days. Maybe I can do something for you to-morrow."

He nodded to me and was off.

I was very excited. Hungarian or not, I had a German

mother, I lived in Germany, I had been brought up there, and I hated the Communists. I had seen the burning of houses in Communist riots, the shop looting, the wanton destruction, and I felt it was no more than my duty to put myself at the disposal of the country whose guest I was, since I was living in it. I did not see it as the Government calling for help—I saw it as the *country*.

And that was the feeling in the minds of many of those young men who raced off that morning to Lankwitz, a suburb of Berlin, where in their great barracks they were given uniform and arms, and from where, an hour later, they marched on Berlin itself.

Peter was in an armoured car. He wore a *litewka* with a black ribbon on his arm: on the ribbon was a skull and crossbones and the inscription 'Armoured Car' in silver. The leader of his squadron was Prince Enzo Reuss, the commander of his car an Indian. They drove through the suburbs to the Wilhelmsplatz and stopped opposite the Hotel Kaiserhof. The square was black with people, and they were given the order to clear it. The crews jumped out of their cars and forced the people back with their rifles: fifteen men against many thousands. But the thousands shrank back, restricting themselves only to the shouting of abuse. In this way all the strategic points of Berlin were taken.

Only after this the first hints came through of what had really happened on that day: the brigade of General von Luettwitz and that of the Nationalist Leader Captain Ehrhardt had made a '*Putsch*.' It was no longer just a question of fighting the Communists: it had been part of a plan to overthrow the Government and to build up a new Germany. With two brigades . . .

The fifteen men on the Wilhelmsplatz were relieved after many hours by men from Captain Ehrhardt's brigade, and they then drove in their armoured cars to the palace

of Prince Friedrich Leopold, where quarters had been arranged for them.

Peter telephoned to me from there.

"Nothing doing here, I'm afraid," he said. "Better try at the new town hall at Schoeneberg."

"Thanks. Had any fighting?"

"No-o."

"Well, so long."

I rushed out of the house and tore off on my bicycle to the new town hall, where several hundred men were sleeping and smoking in the banqueting hall. The guard showed me into an office, where they took down my name and then told me to go: that was all. I was horribly disappointed.

Then in the hall an N.C.O. called me back.

"Got a bicycle, have you?"

"Yes, sir."

He beckoned a young man with lop ears.

"This is Luebke. He's got a bicycle too. He has orders to take a message to the old town hall—the 'phone's not working there. You can go along with him—better if there are two of you."

I got the ominous content of his last thought.

"Can I have a gun?" I asked.

"No." He snapped it out. "You are civilians, see? Inquisitive civilians. You just want to see who's in the old building. Pop off now!"

We grinned and popped off.

"The damn' thing's in my left-hand pocket," said Luebke. "If anything happens to me——"

I nodded, and we rode on. The Hauptstrasse was crowded with people; two armoured cars raced by; from a long way off came the chatter of machine-guns. We did not look at each other; we just rode steadily on until we reached the old town hall. There was another armoured

car outside it, and six or seven men were doing their best to keep a thousand people back with their rifles. The thousand fell back.

We passed the soldiers and rode up to the entrance, where we dismounted. The next second we were gripped by iron hands whose strength I can still feel as I recall it.

"Just a minute," I said hastily. "We've come from the new town hall. Urgent message."

"Come in here," snapped the man who held my collar. Luebke and I were pushed into a room by my man and two others. Once inside they grinned at us.

"Couldn't be helped," said my man. "If that crowd outside knew you belonged to us you wouldn't be left alive to run home to mother. See?"

Luebke handed over his message, and an hour later they literally kicked us out into the street again with a stream of abuse. The crowd roared with laughter at us, and we rode off, looking suitably crestfallen to hide our inner pride at having fooled them.

Back at headquarters, they gave us no new orders.

"You'd better go home now, boys," they said. "We'll send for you if you're needed."

So we went sadly home, hearing the distant crackle of firing, hoping to be sent for the next day—and the next. But the summons did not come.

Wild rumours were spreading: the Government had fled to Breslau; they had called out all the workers on a general strike; an army of Communists was marching on Berlin; France had sent a note that she would declare war if the situation was not cleared up within twenty-four hours; and so on and so forth.

Peter was still in the Palace of Prince Friedrich Leopold with hundreds of students, soldiers, schoolboys, and officers, all bored to death with inaction. Some of the students took down the old rapiers and swords that hung on

the walls and fought innumerable more or less friendly duels. Then some one suggested that they should drive up the Kurfürstendamm in their armoured cars and shoot a couple of Jews. Peter, whose father was a Jew, thought the suggestion might be just a silly joke, but it was enthusiastically received, quite seriously discussed, and it would actually have been carried out but for the interference of an influential officer. That incident gave Peter furiously to think.

Then came the alarming news of the advance on Berlin of an army of Communists forty thousand strong, and Peter was sent hurriedly to warn Prince Enzo Reuss. The Prince was in bed in Prince Friedrich Leopold's room, having just managed to doze off during a bad attack of toothache. His sole comment on Peter's urgent message was an obscene consignment to oblivion of all Communists in general and the forty thousand in particular, after which he turned over and went to sleep again. On hearing of this, however, a junior officer posted two guards and a machine-gun before the Palace gates: this was the sole preparation made against the attack of the forty thousand.

Meanwhile the threatened general strike had become a grim fact: there was no more water, no more electricity, no buses, and no trams. The Nationalists were in a stranglehold. They began to parley, but after a day or two the conferences broke down, and the troops retired to their quarters in Lankwitz followed by jeering mobs. In Lankwitz they dissolved their ranks.

We became schoolboys once more; but there was still in our ears the chatter of machine-gun firing, and the queer, metallic clack of rifles being cocked. There were many wounded and killed, for the Communists had butchered a part of the old town hall garrison.

The behaviour of the police force was not among the least strange things of those strange and terrible days. One

section of the police was clearly on the side of the Nationalists; another section tried to remain neutral and keep impartial order; while a third was on the side of the Government. Naturally enough there were many tragic muddles, and an officer in Peter's squadron, Lieutenant Schaefer, was a victim of this triple division of the police force. When one day a police car approached his armoured car he assumed them to be bringing him a message, climbed out to meet them, and was instantly shot.

The pitiful failure of the '*Putsch*' caused deep despair and bitterness in Nationalist circles. The bitterness was not only against the victors but, more perhaps than all else, against the men who had started such a badly organized campaign. They saw how much real enthusiasm and real patriotic feeling had been abused by the irresponsible leaders of a clumsy and premature attack. But they did not know then just how much they were to suffer for it.

IV

School seemed very odd after taking part in things like these. Short though the time had been, its happenings had been vital enough to make the return to Horace, Virgil, and Thucydides, to sines and cosines, tangents and cotangents, seem very trivial and irrelevant. It was not easy for Peter who had helped with his rifle to clear a thousand people from the streets to be told he was an idiot by an old professor with a paunch and *pince-nez*. It was not even easy for me to knuckle under once again to school discipline, although my share in what had gone before had been so much smaller. The necessary readjustment came slowly, the despatch rider only gradually reverting to the scholar with examinations ahead.

In the autumn of 1920 I passed my finals and qualified as a student, which in Germany means, at any rate for the

first year, a gay, companionable life in which a large part is played by pretty girls, good wine, and plenty of rapier play, and a negligible one by occasional attendances at college. Like others of my year, I had been looking forward to that, but the day after my finals my mother called me into the library.

She had difficult things to say to me, and she hardly knew how to begin. She knew just how much I was looking forward to my life as a student, and she had to tell me that no such thing could come my way. She explained that we had lost nearly all our money, so that it would be impossible for her to send me to a university: I should have to start in a job as soon as possible. She had thought it all out, and she had already spoken to Herbert Gutmann, Director of the Dresdner Bank. I was to become an apprentice in the Deutsch-Südamerikanische Bank A.G., a company closely affiliated with the Dresdner Bank itself.

I sighed and kissed my mother's hand in acquiescence.

The Dresdner Bank, soon to become one of the five leading banks in Germany, had been founded many years before by a majestic old gentleman rather like Bismarck to look at—Geheimrat Eugen Gutmann. It was his son Herbert to whom my mother applied on my behalf, and who found me my first job. He was an excellent business man and, what is more, a first-class diplomat. He was also a man of eclectic tastes, sometimes criticized for his love of luxury: I remember one sharp-tongued old gentleman saying that "the Gobelins were hung one on top of the other in his house." But these critics forgot how much this man had done for others, and for how many he had done it: to us, for instance, he was a real friend, helping my mother through the difficult years before I, at twenty-two, was myself able to take the helm of our ship. There are many others who, like us, have reason to be grateful to Herbert Gutmann. When the Third Reich came he was

forced to leave the bank which his own father had founded. He went to England, and there he was received by his many friends exactly as though he was still the principal director of a powerful bank. Not that that is a matter for surprise: he is a great gentleman, and that in itself is the best passport for England.

He arranged an interview for me with my future employers a few days after my talk with my mother. I went rather gloomily into the grey building which was to be my headquarters for the next four years. I was interviewed by two polite and grave managing directors.

"Have you always intended to go into a bank?" asked one.

"I'm afraid not," I answered, more honest than tactful. "You see, I'm an idealist."

The managing directors exchanged glances.

"Well," said the first drily, "we shall cure you of that disease all right."

That closed the interview.

So I became a fully fledged banking apprentice, and to this day I sympathize with the unfortunate bank which I honoured with my activities. The very first day I lost a cheque for five thousand marks: luckily it was a crossed cheque. The third day I had a one-round fight with a bank messenger whose manners I disliked: he disliked mine far more afterwards. On the sixth day a clerk shouted to me to fetch his typewriter.

"Can't you say 'please'?" I asked, annoyed at his tone.

"Damn your impudence!" he roared.

"All right. Here's your typewriter!" I said, and I picked it up and threw it at him. He caught it instinctively, but I had thrown it too hard: he sprained one finger and his right knee. The Manager sent for me about that, and I was coldly informed that this was a business firm and not a circus nor a boxing ring. But the clerk always said please when he asked me to do anything for him after

that: there was little trace remaining of my former girlishness.

The country was now sailing full steam ahead into that nightmare period of currency inflation.

When England left the gold standard in 1931 it was, export and import trade apart, a more or less isolated affair. It brought no great change to England or to her dominions or colonies: it meant little more than the raising or diminishing of protective duties, and the pound fell only by a third of its value. In Germany, however, things were very different. A pound in 1914 was worth 20 marks and 43 pfennig: just before the end of the inflation period it was worth the fantastic amount of 20,430,000,000,000 marks. It seemed a ghastly kind of joke, an idiot jest; but it was worse than that. It was the sign and symbol of the whole period: Germany was mentally sick for several years.

What else could possibly be said of a country where prices doubled themselves on each successive nightmare day; where the workmen had to be paid twice in each twelve hours; where with half a crown of English currency one could live like a prince for a whole week; where tram conductors and typists gambled on the Stock Exchange with millions of marks?

There was a general flight into 'substantial values.' Once wealthy families were forced to part with their few remaining jewels, their last treasures of antique furniture, for astronomical sums which only sufficed a week later for the price of a box of matches. Speculators streamed into Germany from all parts of the world and bought up castles, factories, materials, cars, and jewellery for a song. Crowds of scavengers swarmed in: they came in shabby clothes and worn-out shoes, but six months later they

were sweeping by in their own cars, a ruined German officer or a half-starved engineer as chauffeur at the wheel.

Many of these profiteers were Jews, and their arrival fanned the already glowing embers of the anti-Semitic movement. People forgot how many Jews had been their honoured scientists and artists; how many thousands of Jews had fought and died for Germany on how many battlefields. They saw only the swollen, arrogant profiteers who now seemed to rule the land; they hated them; they spread their hatred to embrace the whole Semitic race.

We in the banks were rushed off our feet in the great volume of business to be adjusted to the new conditions. The tally of new accounts rose sky high, the number of transactions on the Stock Exchange grew to astronomical figures. And outside in the city there sprang up and blossomed a lush growth of all that was profligate, spendthrift, and wild.

Night life was booming: night clubs and bars of the most exotic type grew up like mushrooms. Every kind of perversion flourished: half a dozen night clubs in Berlin were frequented by men in women's clothes, dozens by women dressed as men: special weekly papers for every conceivable variety of perversion were printed and scattered throughout the country; the number of drug addicts were increased by hundreds of thousands, cocaine especially being in huge demand. Songs about street-walkers were the rage in every cabaret, and films were turned out by the dozen about prostitution, homosexuality, and other such achievements of civilization. Sixteen- and seventeen-year-old shop assistants lounged each evening through in expensive bars, drinking champagne. The older generation was despised, ridiculed, or, at the best, treated with indulgent tolerance: they had fought in the War, poor fools, so what could they know about the Stock Exchange? And as for their views on morals—why, they didn't even

know the facts of life before they got married—at least, the girls didn't—and what they learned afterwards was hardly worth mentioning.

It was not only among the young men either that this profligate spirit was to be found. It was said of the young women of that generation that, while their skirts did reach their knees, their morals assuredly never got as far as that. Prize-fights became very popular, but not so much for the sport's sake as for the blood lust they aroused. The actual boxing value of these fights was small, and more than fifty per cent. of the spectators were always women.

Every one was trying to build up a business of some kind, but it was not so much a matter of trying to do business as trying to cheat the other fellow. Nearly the whole of the upper and middle classes had lost their money in the War, and tens of thousands of German officers had to change their professions and take up some sort of trade. At thirty, thirty-five, forty, they went into business without knowing the first thing about it. To be in business had always seemed to them something almost contemptible, certainly disreputable. One was an officer, one served one's king, and one got one's pay—that had been the old outlook. Now, however, they had to struggle for their living, and very often they mistook fraud for business. The trouble was that to commit a fraud with any success demands a certain cleverness, and they were anything but clever. The end was, of course, prison. In pre-War Germany an officer in prison would have been a monstrous scandal, a sensation: now it was an everyday affair.

No one could actually say any more where right ended and wrong began, for there were thousands of new laws and restrictions and prohibitions, and it was impossible to know them all. Fine men became tainted with the general decay, and honest citizens degenerated into hopeless criminals. After the privations and sufferings of the War

there was a longing for luxury and the intoxication of pleasure: the pendulum swung towards a crude and sensual excess. Religion gave place to superstition and ridiculous mystical cults; love to sexual perversions; philosophical outlook to Stock Exchange quotations; and patriotism to a whining sort of cosmopolitanism. Unschooled statesmen, who would probably have been first-rate artisans, were at their wits' end where to turn, and found themselves asking for advice *at the embassies of foreign Powers*. It was a world gone mad.

The foreign diplomats had many odd experiences with those same unschooled statesmen, now in office for the first time in their lives. My mother and I happened to know the Swedish Minister and his wife, Baron and Baroness Essen, very well. He was a typical Swede, tall, fair, and serious, while she, a daughter of Geheimrat Gutmann, was one of the loveliest women I have ever seen. I remember the look on Baron Essen's face when he told my mother of a visit he had received the day before from the private secretary of a certain German minister. Essen had invited the ministers and ambassadors of various countries to a quiet bachelor party, and, in order to keep it as informal as possible, he had added the words 'Don't dress' to the invitation cards. The private secretary in question had been sent officially to ask the Swedish minister to change this to 'Evening Dress.' To Essen's surprised question why this should be desired the secretary stammered that his chief had just received from his tailor the first evening suit he had ever had, that he was delighted with it, and wanted very much to wear it.

VI

Shortly before the end of this period of national lunacy our family spent some time in Oberammergau—my

mother and Erzsi several months, I only my three weeks' holiday. But those three weeks saved me.

I was twenty now, and a fully fledged clerk. For years I had entered the details of other people's business in ledgers; I had written letters in English, French, Spanish, and Italian; opened and closed accounts; and sent out cheques and drafts. I knew the inside of several hundred bars, and had met about the same number of young women with reasonable willingness. I had had kisses as market rate for Stock Exchange tips; I had danced with third-rate film actresses by way of contrast to their wealthy and worthy elderly protectors; I had accepted invitations to the houses of the so-called 'Society,' where the proceedings were much wilder than in the cabarets and bars.

And then I came to Oberammergau, that tiny village with the mountains round, and where the air is clean and sweet. I remember climbing alone in the mountains, and I remember a sunrise at six thousand feet.

I remember too how I came on the place where the peasants kept their young bulls. They were six months or a year old, clumsy still, but already strong and splendid beasts, full of playfulness and mischief. I used to romp with them, and we would roll over the grass grunting (the bulls), laughing (myself), and kicking (both). They had hardly any horns to speak of yet, but when they kicked me in the stomach it made me long for the solar-plexus blow of a heavyweight boxer. The watching peasant boys would laugh until the tears ran down their faces. I was very proud of my strength, and could at that time carry three middleweights at once for twelve yards, yet a twelve-months bull could run me off my feet without the smallest effort.

One day I saw a girl watching, a peasant girl from the village with a sweet, serious Madonna face and black hair and dark eyes. She had on a red dress and was barelegged,

but her ankles and wrists had the slenderness that usually goes with breeding. Her name was Mari, and her father owned a large farm and much cattle. She and I became friends, and I found her to be as fresh and natural as the soil on which she had been reared.

Two days after my first sight of her I met her again, this time in a barn near her father's farm. She had a white apron and cap on, and was very busy whitewashing the walls of the barn. The brush in her hand was bigger than her small head, and there were flecks of whitewash on her cheek and one right on the tip of her dainty nose. She was so intent that she did not hear me coming.

"Mari," I said in a low voice.

She turned and saw me; then she threw the brush aside, and for the next two hours she did no more whitewashing.

Mari was a revelation. We used to meet in the forest, in little huts up in the mountains, in the house of an old peasant woman who was devoted to the girl. We used to lie out in the meadows talking, telling stories, discussing the gossip of the village, the gossip of the town, and wondering who would play the part of the Holy Virgin at the next performance of the Passion Play.

"I wonder where you got your dark eyes from," I said one day. "Nearly every one is fair round here, aren't they?"

"I—don't—know," she said thoughtfully. "Perhaps the Eagle Man had dark eyes——"

"What Eagle Man?"

She laughed.

"Oh—it's just silly. A silly old story—there can't be anything in it."

I had to tickle her nose with a flowering grass for nearly five minutes before she gave in and told me the story.

"But it's awfully silly," she said again. "Grandfather told it us, and he said he heard it from his grandfather, and so on and so on."

"Go on."

"Well, ever so long ago a man is supposed to have come here with an eagle—or the eagle carried him here on its wings—and then he married my great-great-great-great-great-grandmother——"

"The eagle?"

"No, silly, the man, the Eagle Man. And *he* had black eyes."

She can only have remembered half the original story, and I could not piece the ends together. Then, the day before I had to go back to Berlin, I said good-bye to Mari, and she cried like a child. I myself was none too happy at leaving her, and that night I had a dream.

I dreamed of a long column of men marching over the hills towards Oberammergau, their arms glittering in the sunlight. When they came nearer I saw that they were Roman soldiers, wearing the field uniform of early Roman Empire days, their helmets slung on their breasts, spade and palisades on their backs. The leader of the column was a tall man with an iron breastplate, iron helmet, and cuisses, and he carried the eagle of a Roman legion. I even saw the number of it—XVI. His eyes were very dark: and they were Mari's eyes. Silently the whole column passed me by.

I woke suddenly: the maid was knocking at my door.

"Eight o'clock," she cried. My train was leaving in an hour's time: it was time to get up. But I knew now who had been that ancestor of Mari's. He had not been carried here by an eagle. He had carried an eagle—the eagle of the Sixteenth Legion.

Later, in Berlin, I told the story to a friend of mine who is a great authority on Roman history.

"What number did you say was on the eagle?" he asked eagerly.

"Sixteen, as far as I can remember."

He nodded.

"The Sixteenth Legion did have its headquarters up there in the Rhaetian Alps," he said.

"When was that?"

"In Tiberius' time. Some of the legion may well have been sent to that village. And you—— Good gracious!"

He looked at me as though I were some rare and curious sea monster—a reaction which drove me quickly away, for I dislike being thought uncanny.

So that is where Mari's black eyes and slender wrists and ankles came from—after nearly nineteen centuries. She was no Bavarian peasant lass: she was a lady of old Imperial Rome.

TIME OF ENJOYMENT

I exchange banking for fashion designing—Publicity man for Ufa Films—My best friend visits my future wife in a lamentable condition—The tenth Muse : Diphtheria—I almost miss my own wedding—Salutes and flags at Malta—Tripoli—The Arab who had made enough money for the day.

SUDDENLY, unexpectedly, the period of inflation ended: the gold mark came, then the Renten-mark, and finally the Reichsmark. The new era of a stable currency once more opened with the sudden breakdown of the inflation firms: all those swollen, gas-bag, mammoth companies exploded, their remains melting into thin air. There was a wholesale dismissal in the business world of hundreds of clerks and officials, first of all, of course, in the banking business.

One day when I got home I found my mother in an especially happy mood. A poor little clerk of the Dresdner Bank had applied to her, a man with a wife and three children. He had been given notice, and, happening to know that my mother was a close friend of his director, Herr Herbert Gutmann, he had asked her to plead his cause. She had telephoned at once to Herbert, and he had been kind enough to promise her that the clerk should have his job again. My mother was delighted to feel that she had been able to do this for the worried man.

I nodded when she said so.

"Fine," I said. "By the way—I have been sacked to-day."

At first my mother could not believe her ears. I muttered something about hard times, necessary measures, and all the sort of things one says when one does not want to give the real reason.

She reached for the telephone, determination in every line of her: she had succeeded on behalf of a practical stranger, so she was convinced of success on behalf of her own son. But I caught her hand in time and put back the receiver.

"Don't," I said softly. "It's no use. I shall never get anywhere in banking. I'm not cut out for it, you see."

She looked at me and shook her head.

"But—what are you going to do then?"

"I don't know yet, but I'll get something all right."

Again she shook her head.

"You'll never make so much money again," she said plaintively. My salary at the bank had been 119 marks a month—not quite ten pounds.

"I'll never make so *little* again," I said, though I had no plan of any kind for making that boast come true.

I only knew that, with inflation-fever dead, the quiet, solid business of banking was the most appalling bore as far as I was concerned. I had not the sense of organization possessed by most of my colleagues which enabled them cleverly to spread their daily quota of work over the full eight hours of attendance at the bank. I used to finish my two dozen letters in a couple of hours, so that I had just to hang about with nothing to do all the afternoon, and to fill in that time I used to draw caricatures or write short stories which I used to read to my colleagues. My superiors, of course, got the impression that I did no work at all, and my colleagues did not appreciate my methods either, not so much perhaps because they had to listen to my short stories, as because I gave away their own system of stretching the minimum of work to the maximum proportion, like a rubber band. So it was decided to dispense with the services of the young man who spent his time drawing and scribbling instead of doing honest work.

I could not very well explain all that to my mother: I preferred to try and make a little money out of my hobbies. Here Peter helped me for the second time in my life. He too had been working in a bank during the inflation, and had also been given his notice at its close. He was now employed by a firm of ready-made ladies' dresses, owned by a friend of his father's. He told his employer about me in terms which gave the impression that he could secure for the firm the services of a Murillo and a Titian rolled into one, and that for a mere song.

I got the job, which was to make drawings of the season's collection of frocks, which drawings were then sent out to customers. Mannequins were detailed to pose for me, and it was all great fun: one tall blonde with merry grey eyes was especially charming.

I got ten marks for every drawing, and the first collection consisted of forty models. I finished them in three weeks, and by the end of the first month was already making three times the amount which I had been paid at the bank. But then the slavish copying of some one else's mediocre ideas began to pall, and I started to work in a few of my own. This annoyed my chief considerably, for he was not able to deliver to his customers what I had promised them.

I saw his point perfectly, and decided to turn my creative longings towards something other than the actual frocks. I depicted the pretty girl in the red jersey silk in the process of being kissed by a good-looking young man; and the charming *débutante* in blue georgette as followed adoringly by four young men in immaculate evening dress.

My chief literally foamed.

"I want serious drawings—not erotic illustrations to Casanova!"

It is no good explaining to a man in that state that he is speaking in anachronisms, so I bowed and knuckled down

I FOLLOW MY STARS

to doing serious drawings. For the less serious ones I arranged 'rehearsals' with that tall blonde mannequin. Her name was Natasha, and she was the daughter of a Russian count who had lost his last rouble in the revolution.

"But you mustn't remind me of Rrrussia," she would say, blowing the smoke of a clandestine cigarette through her little nose.

I never did, having some sense of tact: her real name was Grete Schmidt. In any case, we had better things to do; unfortunately however, my chief one day elected to come into dressing-room No. 3 at a moment when we least expected such a visit. Thus ended my career as fashion artist.

II

Herbert Gutmann was at that time not only principal director of the Dresdner Bank, but also on the boards of more than fifty large companies, including that of Ufa Films. Erich Pommer, at present with Charles Laughton as director of Mayflower Films in London, was the managing director. He was a splendid organizer, combining first-class business ability with a profound understanding of creative production, and few men can boast of having done so much for the German film as he. Under his management Ufa productions had a world-wide release and reputation. Herbert Gutmann recommended me to him, and I was given a job at three hundred marks a month in his publicity department, where at first I found the work and contacts of absorbing interest.

As far back as I can remember I had always been attracted by anything to do with the film industry. At fourteen and fifteen I had many a time played truant in order to hang around the studios or do odd days of work as an 'extra.' I had met Friedrich Zelnik—at present

producing in London—and his lovely wife, Lya Mara, who used to play the lead in all his films. I used to ferret about on all the sets, pursue the unfortunate Zelnik with gags for his scripts, and make such a nuisance of myself to every one on the floor that I was always being thrown out of the studio.

I tried the same thing with Joe May—at present with Warner Brothers in Hollywood—who was already considered one of the best directors in Germany. He too made his films starring his wife, Mia May, a charming person with masses of fair curls and a sweet little face. I adored her, and kept no less than sixty-four different photographs of her in my room. I did not dream then as a schoolboy that I would one day collaborate with her husband; nor did I dream it when I became a minor employee of a giant firm where only the background and not the content of my activities was of interest.

I was put by our director of publicity—a woman, incidentally—to supervise the putting out of posters, to make up the advertising matter, and to give out the notices to the Press. My chief could not stand me: perhaps my engagement through Herbert Gutmann's recommendation may have given her the idea that I was acting as a spy for the board of directors. Anyhow, she did her best to keep me out of anything of any importance.

Very soon I was back at my old tricks, finishing my day's work in three or four hours, and spending the rest of the time in sitting about writing short stories. One of these, a blood-curdler about an Indian yogi with enough horror in it to give even Boris Karloff the creeps, was bought by a magazine.

About then I fell in love with the pretty—and spoiled—daughter of a wealthy Society woman who had just married for the second time—a tenor. The daughter was rather a dear, and this was probably her first love affair, but her

mother found us out, and evidently jumped to the conclusion that I was after her daughter's money, though even in those days I would infinitely have preferred to try murder for money than marriage for it.

However, my fancied future mother-in-law began to show a marked coldness and suspicion in her manner, and I racked my brains for a plan which would better her opinion of me. I discussed the whole thing with Peter, and we had the inspiration of arranging to have the mother and daughter attacked by thieves on their way home. Peter was cast for the rôle of First Thief, and a friend of his for Second Thief, both heavily disguised, while I was to appear at the critical moment in the character of Rescuing Hero. The inevitable result after the flight of the criminals would be, of course, the eternal gratitude of the mother and her blessings on my marriage with her daughter.

I am afraid it was rather a poor film story, but we worked out the plan to the minutest detail; and then I heard a piece of news which spoiled everything. My future mother-in-law was expecting another child.

I told Peter about it.

"We can't possibly risk frightening her now," I said.

"No," he said. "It's not done to damage a green tree."

And so we left it at that, but the tenor had by this time got wind of the romance. He wrote a furious letter to my unfortunate mother in which he threatened a *duel* if I did not give up seeing the girl. The inspiration of thus writing to my mother instead of to me direct may possibly have saved the life of a great singer, but, quite apart from that, the case of a challenger using his opponent's mother as the challenge bearer is, I think, unique in the whole history of duelling.

Nothing drastic happened, however, for the combined pressure of both mother and stepfather was too much for

the seventeen-year-old girl, and she allowed herself to be married off elsewhere not long afterwards. My stars had saved me from marriage with a spoiled little nonentity, so that I was free when, a few months later, I met the girl with whom I truly fell in love—my wife, Putti.

Her real name was Alexandra, and she bore that royal name rightly, not so much because her mother was Princess Iphigenie Soutzo, whose ancestors ruled Rumania two hundred years ago, as because she herself had a royal nature.

I met her at a big tea-party given by a German banker. She arrived rather late, and I remember ever so well how she hurried in, and how her face was almost entirely hidden from me by the huge hat she was wearing. As her hostess greeted her I was able to see more: the tip of a charmingly *retroussé* nose, a very red mouth, and a firm little chin, a Pheidias line from neck to shoulder, and slender hands with tiny fingers.

I attacked at once, routed two or three hovering admirers with more or less witty shafts, and simply did not leave her side the whole of the rest of the afternoon. I took her home too.

"Please do *not* phone me," she said quietly. "Maybe I'll call *you*."

I realized that she meant what she said, and forced myself, day after day, to keep away from the telephone. A week later she did ring me up, and very soon after that I realized that she was the only girl in the world for me.

I had told Peter all about her, of course, and had also told her all about Peter. She wanted to meet him, so she asked the two of us to dinner.

"There'll only be the three of us," she said, "so don't dress."

Peter was still working in the ready-made dress firm.

He hated the work, which only brought him into contact with third-rate people: he had wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and become a doctor, but the post-War financial catastrophe put a stop to that.

I got in touch with him at his office and arranged that he should call for me at Ufa Films on the evening on which we were to dine with Putti. He duly turned up at seven o'clock.

"Good evening," he said very politely. "I hope you are quite well."

I stared at him in amazement. His usual greeting was a grunt, after which he would at once start to fill his pipe: this was a new Peter, this suave, polite fellow, and I could not make it out.

"What on earth——"

He chuckled.

"It's all right," he said. "It'll wear off—don't you worry. Everything always wears off—it's quite all right."

"But what's wrong, old boy? Are you ill, or something?"

"I'm fine," said Peter. "I'm just as tight as a lord, that's all. That's what I am—tight. Very much so."

"You're *what*?" I asked, because I simply did not believe my ears.

"Tight," he repeated cheerfully. "I can see two of you—and you're wearing six pairs of glasses. But it doesn't matter."

"But it *does*!" I shouted. "Damn it, you can't even talk like a human being. How can I take you to meet my *fiancée* in that sort of state, d'you think?"

"So you've gone and got engaged," he said. "Without even giving me a chance of looking her over first. Pretty rash, you know—getting engaged at twenty-one *and* behind my back and all. Still—it doesn't matter really."

"Oh, you're hopeless."

TIME OF ENJOYMENT

"Not at all," he said very decidedly. "Not hopeless—only tight. And that I *am*—very much so."

I was furious.

"I've known you six years now, and I've never seen you drunk before. You would choose just to-day when I want to introduce you to——"

"It is always just to-day. And, by the way, I should like to point out that it's not my fault at all. I'm a victim of a sense of duty——"

"Sense of duty my foot!"

He grinned cheerfully.

"Elly had a birthday to-day," he said, as though that would explain everything.

"And who the hell is Elly?"

"Elly is our best mannequin, and to-day was the dress show for presenting our summer collection. Un-understand now?"

"Not a thing."

He shook his head, bewildered.

"Funny," he said. "You're not so slow in the uptake as a rule. Oh, yes—of cuc-course—I forgot to mention the curaçao. Funny that I should have forgotten that. I've just drunk it. The whole blessed lot. But it doesn't matter."

I got up and shook him.

"Pull yourself together, you ass," I said. "You're just gabbling nonsense."

"Steady on," he protested. "I'm not a medicine to be shaken before taken, you know. It's jolly dangerous——Where was I? Oh, yes, the curaçao. Never drink cuc-cuc-curaçao. S'dangerous thing to do—I know."

He sat down heavily.

"Now listen to me," he said with great determination. "Are you listening? Good. Well, Elly had a birthday——"

"You've said that already."

He shook his head.

"I wish you wouldn't keep on interrupting me," he said angrily. "S'a very bad habit of yours. Well, Elly had a birthday, you see. And the other girls gave her a bottle of curaçao as a pup-present. For her birthday, you see. And to-day was the dress show, and Elly and the girls would have drunk all that curaçao. Just imagine it—I ask you. They'd have made a frightful mess. Of the dress show, I mean. That's where I came in, see? I said, 'Bet you I c'n finish that bottle of curaçao all by myself.' The girls betted I couldn't. And now I'm tight, of cuc-course. Sus-sense of duty, old boy—honour of the firm saved, and all that. But it doesn't matter."

That was the longest speech I have ever heard Peter make: he is one of those people who only open their mouths when absolutely necessary, and then not very widely.

I looked at my watch: it was ten past seven, and dinner was at seven-thirty.

"What on earth am I to do with you? In that state——"

"That'll be all right," reassured Peter. "I shall get used to it."

He rose with some difficulty, only able to stand by leaning heavily on the edge of my desk.

"Everything's going splendidly," he said.

In silent despair I put on my hat and took Peter's arm.

"We're going to walk," I said grimly.

"Why walk?"

I hauled him out of the door.

"Because there is such a thing as fresh air, and fresh air is just what you need."

"What I really need is twenty-four hours of sleep."

He tottered down the stairs, my arm saving his life some half-dozen times before we finally left the building. And I made him walk, too, all the way to Putti's house.

He improved a bit; not much, however, and I did not see how I could take him in.

Just by the house there was an old-fashioned sort of pump where cab-drivers once used to water their horses. There were hardly any cabs left now, but the pumps were still left standing. By this one Peter stopped and said, "That's the very thing I was looking for." He took off his collar and tie, put his head under the pump, and shouted up, "Dud-do your duty, Executioner!"

I did it: I lifted the pump handle, and water streamed over Peter's head. Half a dozen passers-by stopped and watched with kindly interest. I squinted up at Putti's window, horribly afraid she might be looking out to watch for our arrival, but she was not.

At last Peter signalled he had had enough and shook himself like a terrier after a bath. Then he started in to part his hair. It was particularly difficult to get that parting straight, and he aimed at it several times like a gunner; finally he managed it.

"Hair's never been so tidy," he declared with enthusiasm. "What more d'you want—I'm ready for any damn' thing. It's a grand moment to meet your little bit——"

"She's not my little bit. She's my *fiancée*—soon will be, anyway."

"—because I'm still seeing double. So, you see, it's a grand day to meet her because I'll be seeing two girls—one for you and one——"

We were in the hall by then, and I gripped his shoulder.

"Peter!" was all I said.

He stiffened and looked at me then.

"It'll be all right," he said quietly. "You can trust me."

And he climbed the stairs to the second floor with firm steps, he made a perfectly polite bow to Putti, and he behaved beautifully at dinner, although he was unusually

silent, even for him. His only remark through hors d'œuvre, soup, fish, joint, sweets, and cheese was a dry "There is no salt."

In an effort to keep the conversation alive I began to talk of our practice fights. We used to train together a lot at that time, and the big difference in weight was more than equalized by Peter's technical skill.

"He is faster; I am stronger," I said. Then I picked up a hard-boiled egg and broke it in the tightened biceps of my left arm. Unfortunately it was not a hard-boiled egg at all, but a soft one, and the result was quite disastrous. I had never dreamed that there could be so much white and yellow liquid in one single egg. My face was covered with it, the tablecloth, Putti's dress, and even her hair, and yet there was still yolk enough for a series of wild and barbarous ornamentations to the green silk tapestry.

During the next ten minutes we were all kept busy cleaning up the mess, and directly after dinner was over Peter muttered something about a wash and disappeared. Putti was tactful enough to find him charming, though we both skirted round the curious fact that he did not reappear. He was away for more than half an hour, and suddenly appeared again without any explanation, quiet, serene, and rather ceremonious. He joined in the conversation at least three or four times, and always with the most well-chosen words, but when, half an hour later, we took our leave I had a horrid conviction that we had made a thorough mess of the evening.

"Egg-smasher," said Peter when we got outside. "You'll be darned lucky if you ever get invited there again after that!"

"How about minding your *own* business," I snapped. "I'm glad you pulled yourself together in the end. Do you realize you were away nearly three-quarters of an hour?"

He nodded.

"I had a bath," he said. "Ah, here's my bus. Cheerio!" And he was off. I stood stock-still where I was for a minute or two; then I staggered home.

That was Peter's first visit to my future wife, and even to-day we still cannot help laughing whenever it is mentioned: Putti had, of course, realized his condition from the first.

Soon after this I asked Putti to marry me, and she accepted. I was even prouder then than after my victory over Sindloff, Gehrmann, and Henning, for she was giving up some very brilliant prospects in accepting me instead of others who had asked her the same question. There was not the faintest chance of our making our engagement public, for neither she nor I had any money. I worked out that, to give her the life to which she was accustomed, and to support my mother as I wished, I should need at least twenty thousand marks a year. As my income then was not quite four thousand, it was clear that something would have to be done and done quickly.

I started writing a novel during the afternoon office hours. The hero was a prize-fighter, for boxing had become very popular, and I knew something about it. There was not a champion in the world whose record I did not know by heart, and I had studied the history of boxing from Mendoza's bare-fist fights in England to the fights of Dempsey and Carpentier, at that time the world's best heavyweights. My hero was, in fact, rather like Carpentier.

Unfortunately for the novel there was a sudden rush of work at Ufa Films, and, in spite of writing at home in the evenings, I found that I was making very slow progress. Oddly enough, however, an illness saved the situation, for I picked up a diphtheria germ somewhere or other. Nowadays diphtheria is not the terror that it used to be: after a first agonizing sore throat and temperature, a couple of days for the diagnosis to be proved, a couple of

injections, and three days more sore throat one feels right on top of one's form. But the chief point of the treatment is that one has to stay in bed for three weeks, for the injections put a heavy strain on the heart, and if this is increased by any bodily exertion the results may be serious, even fatal.

So there I was—twenty-one, fighting-fit, and sentenced to bed for three weeks. The only thing I could do was to write—and I wrote and I wrote and I wrote. In three weeks' time, when I got up, two hundred and fifty pages of foolscap got up with me: the novel was finished.

Four weeks later a big Berlin evening paper bought the serial rights for two thousand marks. A few months later the novel appeared in book form, while the serial rights of my second novel had already been sold—this time for five thousand marks. The serial rights of the third brought in seven thousand, and a film company paid a high price for the film rights. Then, one year to the day from my secret engagement to Putti, my publisher offered me a contract which secured me an income of twenty-five thousand marks a year. I had justified Putti's confidence.

We announced our engagement at once, and the wedding took place a few months later, Peter, of course, acting as my best man.

The day before we were married Putti and I had a long talk. We were neither of us the type to rush into anything as serious as marriage without laying a pretty careful foundation, though I was twenty-two—a couple of years younger than she—a good deal less wise, and with far less knowledge of the world.

"You are a writer," she said. "And the most important thing for a writer is that his life should not be a dull one. If it is his books will inevitably be dull too. You are getting married very young—right at the beginning of

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your career—so it's up to me to see to it that your life isn't a dull one."

I muttered something nice—and meant it—but she waved it aside almost impatiently.

"We must live *intelligently*," she said. "Each must give the other real freedom as each sees that it is right. You must do quite a bit of your travelling without me—and I without you, for instance."

"Well, I hope we can at least share the honeymoon," I laughed.

But she remained quite serious.

"I won't come on your second journey, though," she said. "You don't know the world—and you want to be a writer! That's impossible *à la longue*. And travelling with me you'd be bound to meet quite a different sort of people than if you were alone. That's obvious?"

"Nicer people, I suppose?"

"Maybe," she said. "But you've got to know all sorts of people. You've got to—to loaf around, if you know what I mean, in all sorts of odd corners of the world. I don't care for that sort of thing very much—I'm too lazy. But you need to care for it—and then you come back to me afterwards."

She went on earnestly.

"You see," she said, "I want you to get richer through me, not poorer. I want you to win, not lose—even in freedom. And what I'm saying to-day is for always. It's my—my wedding present to you: You are to take for yourself whatever you want out of life."

III

We were married the next day, though Maimée (Marie Aimée), Putti's sister, did her very best to prevent it. Volatile at the best of times, the excitement of a wedding

went completely to her head: she raced from one room to the other for hours before the ceremony, making sure that everything was all right, and disturbing and upsetting everybody in the process; finally she drove to the church in my Mercédès instead of in the car with Putti as arranged, with the result that I myself was left stranded.

It is an old German custom to get married in evening dress instead of morning coat, so that I found myself in the street in the bright midday sunshine wearing tails and a top hat, cursing uselessly at the complete absence of taxis. Ours was a very quiet street, and the nearest taxi-rank was half a mile away: I walked, and I cannot say that my thoughts were those constructive and serious ones usually credited to a bridegroom in the quarter of an hour before the ceremony. I knew that the whole church-load was waiting: Putti, my mother, more than a hundred guests, including the Rumanian Minister—and Maimée. I racked my brains for a satisfactory revenge on Maimée, if possible to be carried out before we finally left the church. I should not be able to tread off her train—dresses were worn too short for that. Then luckily a cruising taxi picked me up, and I got to the church only ten minutes late, and never did revenge myself on Maimée.

She may not be made for organizing, but she has plenty of other qualities, in particular a reckless personal courage. When, like Putti, she lost all her money during the inflation, she joined a riding expedition round the world, much to the horror of her aunt, old Princess Élise Soutzo, in Paris. In Yugoslavia she made a bet with the leader of the expedition that she could drink just as much water as her horse, but the horse won by half a bucket.

When the expedition collapsed financially in Greece Maimée returned to Germany and went on a trip to the Rhineland, at that time still under French occupation.

In Mainz a French soldier asked to see her passport, at which she declared curtly that she was German and in Germany, and therefore saw no necessity to show any passport to anyone. The soldier insisted, which was too much for Maimée, and she told him bluntly her opinion of the French in general and of himself in particular, which must have made quite crisp hearing. The soldier called for reinforcements, and Maimée was made to leave the train and was taken to the military prison in Mainz, and there charged with having insulted the French Army.

All sorts of people did their best for her at the French Embassy in Berlin, Putti in particular, who happened to know the Ambassador very well, and the officer presiding at the military court was instructed to treat her with the utmost leniency.

As mild as Buddha's smile, he said to Maimée, "I see from your passport, madame, that you were born in Paris, which makes you, in a way, one of us. So you could not have had the *intention* of being insulting, could you?"

Said Maimée, *fortissimo*, "Being born in a stable doesn't necessarily mean one's a horse!"

Even the mild president could not quite overlook this retort, and, swallowing heavily, he sentenced Maimée to six months in a prison which very soon regretted her presence. The inmates were mostly what were called 'patriotic prisoners'—people sentenced for hostile actions against the French. Maimée organized sing-songs among her fellow-prisoners, and for weeks the wretched warders and officials were tormented by daylong renderings—in part singing—of all the German war songs. They were practically in a state of nervous prostration by the time that Maimée was released, radiant and half a stone fatter than before—she had received in prison more food parcels than could have been consumed by a whole battalion.

A few years later she went first to her aunt, Princess

Caradja, in Athens, and from there to Egypt, where she became companion to the wife of a pasha. When she got bored with that she booked a passage in a ship going up the Nile, crossed Nubia, the Sudan, and Kenya, sailed up the Tanganyika in a small boat alone with eleven negroes, and settled down at the Lupa river, near Mbeya, where she started digging for gold. And that is what she is still doing now.

IV

Putti and I had agreed to spend our honeymoon in Austria, for I wanted to show her Alt-Aussee, where I had spent so many years of my childhood. Nearly all my peasant friends were still alive, and I was very happy to pick up old threads and revisit familiar landmarks, but I could not live very long in the past: the present was too vivid. After only a week we moved on to Italy, with the idea of staying a fortnight in Rome, but after only three days I began to long so much for the sea and for that town which one must see before one dies that we left for Naples. From there it was only a stone's throw to Capri, and so we threw the stone and decided finally to stay there, if possible, for the rest of our lives.

Capri was bewitchingly beautiful, a Phæacian island, yet after only one full week there we confessed to each other that we now knew every corner of it, and that the picture of Taormina which we had seen in the little travel-agency window looked quite magically attractive. So we boarded a steamer and crossed one stormy night to Palermo, whence we went by rail *via* Messina to Taormina at the foot of Etna. It is the most beautiful place I know—and probably one of the most beautiful places in the world—and ten whole days passed before I dared to mention that it was not very far from there to Malta, a mere six hours by boat from Syracuse.

Putti nodded.

"Then why not go on to Africa?" she asked softly. "It can't be very far from Malta."

I stared at her.

"You are perfectly right," I cried enthusiastically. "Of course we'll do that!"

In Syracuse we found a little old steamer, the *Derna*. She was fully booked, but we were given the first officer's cabin. He in his turn took the chief engineer's cabin, but I never found out where the chief engineer went to.

The next morning we arrived at Malta, and our entry into the port of La Valetta was most impressive. The whole of the Mediterranean fleet was there, and every ship had flagged over the tops. All the official buildings were beflagged too, and a detachment of soldiers in full-dress uniform was formed up on the quay. As we steamed in a dozen 'planes circled roaring and thundering over the harbour, and the shore battery fired a salute.

Putti and I looked at each other. Apart from ourselves, the passengers on our ship were only some inoffensive Italian tourists and the members of a little theatrical company bound for Tripoli.

"I'm not as well known as that yet," I said, shaking my head. "And my books haven't been translated into English anyhow, so why receive us with such *éclat*?"

Putti could not make it out either, but we both did our best and bowed and smiled gracefully to the shore battery, whose saluting guns were still blazing away.

Eventually we discovered that behind our ship another one was steaming into the harbour—a Japanese vessel of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha Line—and one of the ship's officers told us that she had on board King Albert and

Queen Elizabeth of the Belgians, on their way home from a tour of Japan.

"That's why," said Putti.

"Yes," I said disappointedly; but then I remembered that my mother had once won her all-in wrestling match with that same Queen and felt better.

Several years later I came to Malta again, this time on my way back from Tunis. When my ship entered the harbour the British fleet once more flagged over the tops, a detachment of soldiers formed up, 'planes roared all over the harbour, and the shore battery fired the salute.

"Got it this time," I thought triumphantly. I had had fifteen books published by then, so it seemed a bit more reasonable, if still somewhat exaggerated. But my first experience had made me cautious, and I walked to the stern to see whether the King and Queen of the Belgians were sneaking in behind us again.

They were not. But a long modern destroyer flying the French flag *was*, and she had on board her the Commander-in-Chief of the French Mediterranean fleet, Admiral Dubois.

Since then I only travel on ships which do not touch at Malta: I could not survive a third disappointment.

After a rather stormy voyage we came to Tripoli, which was a very different place then from the Tripoli of to-day. The hotels were new and clean, but the food was practically uneatable. In Northern Italy they sometimes cook with oil instead of butter; in Southern Italy they sometimes cook with butter instead of oil; but in Tripoli they cook exclusively with oil which must be older than the very town itself. Considering that the town was founded by the ancient Romans, I shall be understood when I say

that we only escaped death by a miracle. Of the three days we stayed in Tripoli we spent two in bed.

On the third we went for a walk through the town with an American called Everett. He was a business-man retired six months before and now travelling round the world. In an hour and a half we 'made' the town, meaning that we had visited the Arabian market, two of the seven mosques, the bazaars, and the Turkish Bath, which was nearly as hot as the atmosphere outside in the streets.

Everett then suggested getting some camels and riding across the desert to the nearest oasis—if there was one. I agreed enthusiastically; Putti too, but minus the enthusiasm. We found a *devedji*, a camel-lender, somewhere right on the outskirts of the town: a tall, haggard Arab with a short black beard, wearing a worn-out *burnous*, and smoking a hemp-filled pipe. His camels, half a dozen of them, were picketed near by.

Everett spoke to him in English, but got no reply, not even a glance, and said he must be deaf or dumb, or both. I tried broken Italian: the Arab blinked and looked bored, his sole reaction.

"There you are," said Everett triumphantly.

I tried French, but this time the man did not even blink.

Then a shabbily dressed little man came up and offered us his services as dragoman.

"Tell him we want three of his camels for a two hours' ride," I said.

"Two hours!" said Putti, and sighed deeply.

The dragoman translated. I tried in vain to recognize a single word, thinking Karl-May Arabic must have deserted me entirely. Only much later I discovered what a big difference there is between the Arabic of Tripoli and the classical Arabic of El Azhar.

Our dragoman got a few sulky words as an answer, and told us that the man did not want to lend us his camels.

"Why not?"

"He has already lent two of them to-day."

"And he did not get them back, I suppose. Well, tell him he can come with us if he wants to."

"No, no, he has got his camels back all right. But he has made money enough to-day. He doesn't need any more."

Everett goggled. "Gee!" he said. "That can't be the real reason for sure. The man must be crazy."

The dragoman shrugged his shoulders.

"That's the way Arabs feel about it."

The American got so excited that I was afraid he would have some kind of a stroke.

"It's impossible!" he stormed. "It can't be true! You must have misunderstood the guy. Tell him I'll give him a security for his beasts. Tell him I'm a rich man. Ask him how much he wants, see?"

The dragoman shrugged again, and began talking to the Arab, who answered with one word only, not, I feel sure, a polite one.

Everett wiped his forehead.

"Is this a mad-house?" he cried. "Tell him—tell him if he lends us his camels now he won't need any customers for three days and can be as lazy as he wants. That's sense—he must understand that!"

The dragoman translated again, and this time he got a longer answer. He grinned.

"He says, to-morrow Allah will send him another customer if it pleases Him, and if it does not please Him it is written in the Book of Life, and he cannot do anything about it."

Everett looked at the dragoman, and then at the Arab,

TIME OF ENJOYMENT

who had put down his pipe and had rolled over on his side, the *burnous* drawn up over his head. Even Everett understood that he meant, "Do not disturb."

"Let's beat it," he gasped. "I need a drink."

Putti beamed.

CHAPTER V

TIME OF TRAVEL

Peter goes mad—Conversation in Latin—Greetings between Japanese ships—"You . . . can talk to ghosts"—The secret of the Pyramid—The mysterious chest—The Valley of the Kings—A coincidence that no novelist would dare to invent—The man who dined in burberry and cap—Smyrna and Stamboul.

THE next day Putti and I sailed back to Syracuse. We had to get back: to begin with, we had seen everything in Tripoli; to continue, my right hand was itching to get back to my desk in Berlin; and to clinch matters, we had begun to run short of money. We had budgeted for a honeymoon of four weeks in Alt-Aussee and a fortnight in Vienna, instead of which we had ended up in Africa and were already in the seventh week of our trip. When we finally got back to Berlin we had not even enough for our taxi fare.

I wrote two books and my first film scenario, and then I found that I could not stand the idea of being in town for more than six months on end. It had to be broken by travel, and that is how I still seem to feel. I was all right for money; I decided to go; and I asked Peter to come too.

"Where?" he asked.

"Egypt, I think."

"All right."

"But it won't be a luxurious sort of travelling," I warned him. "I want to see something of the other side of the picture, if you know what I mean."

"All right with me," he said again.

I got leave for him from his employer—the same man for whom I had worked as a fashion artist. Natasha too

was still there, but she had put on a stone or two, and was now the fattest mannequin in the firm.

There was a certain satisfaction in asking my ex-chief if I could take one of his clerks with me to Egypt; and the same sort of feeling in having my current account at the Deutsch-Südamerikanische Bank, where I had worked for a ridiculous salary for four whole years, and where I was now able to pay in sums which I knew to be larger than the salary of the manager himself. It may have been a petty satisfaction, but it was a real one.

Peter was given his holiday, and we rushed down to Naples, where we went on board the *Fushimi Maru*. We travelled third class, and the third class was, according to the company's own leaflet, "somewhat rough," judging by European standards.

We were given an enormous cabin with six or eight berths in three tiers above each other. It was nice and clean.

"Grand," said Peter.

"Wonderful," said I. I had got tonsillitis in Naples, and Peter had sprained his ankle and had to use a stick, but we had made up our minds to enjoy everything.

"I do hope we don't get anyone else in here," I said. In the cabin next door were three Japanese playing *go*; in the next but one two Indians and an old Malay. The Japanese were wearing kimonos and sandals, the Indians long white robes, and the Malay an old blue *sarong* and a worn-out turban. He had a yellow face, beardless and wrinkled, and looked like a shrewd old woman.

The ship sailed.

"Nobody will be coming now," said Peter contentedly.

We were not putting in anywhere before Port Said, so we felt safe. Then heavy steps came down the steep stairs, and a fat and very dirty little man appeared. He was about thirty-five or forty, and certainly had not shaved for at

least three days. As a sort of compensation for that, however, he was bald in a queer way which carried his forehead right over to end in his neck, and he tried to paralyse the bad impression made by some forty or fifty grease-spots on his blue suit by a powerful drenching of cheap scent, which he had sprayed all over himself. His hands were yellow with nicotine, and his nails were bitten; he was wearing yellow boots, and, of course, white, or formerly white, spats, but the worst was that he smiled continuously. Maybe he thought that this was the right thing to do on board a Japanese ship, but the unfortunate result was to display a row of blackened and decayed teeth which made Peter and me feel absolutely sick.

"*Bon soir*," said that nightmare of a cabin mate with a villainous French accent. "My name is Vazirghian."

"Not so loud, *please*," I whispered. "The gentleman with me is terribly nervous and very sensitive to noise of any kind. He's just had a fit, you know."

Monsieur Vazirghian started, and gave Peter an anxious look.

Peter's face was twitching and twitching.

"What do you mean—a fit?" asked Monsieur Vazirghian, now whispering too. "Is—is the monsieur by any chance—ill?"

"Not really ill," I whispered. "They *say* he is cured; at least, they said so when they released him. But he must not get excited, you know."

"I see, I see," whispered Monsieur Vazirghian, obviously wishing himself miles away.

"What are you whispering about over there?" asked Peter sharply, and he rolled his eyes.

"Now then, now then," I calmed him. "You know you mustn't get excited, don't you?"

Peter's hands made strange nervous movements.

"I mustn't get excited, eh? With you talking behind my back all the time! Who is this man anyhow? Is he a doctor? How do I know that he is not? Fat, ugly people very often are."

With a jump which would have done credit to a chimpanzee Peter was on the upper berth; he looked down on us and ground his teeth. The Armenian shrank back against the wall. He was pale and trembled a lot, but he did not go.

"I do hope you sleep soundly," I said to him. "He sometimes makes rather strange noises at night, and then, of course, he walks in his sleep—that is rather annoying, you know."

"Heyheyhey," said Peter, staring vacantly round the cabin.

"There—it's beginning again," I groaned. "Not a day when one can have any peace and quiet."

"Ooohooo!" howled Peter, scratching himself like a monkey.

"All right, all right—I can see we're going to have another noisy night," I said sadly. "He can't get out of the cabin—I shall lock it. But he always tramps up and down, and sometimes he scratches people, too."

"But this is terrible," muttered Monsieur Vazirghian.

"It is not very nice," I admitted, shrugging my shoulders. "But what can I do? He is cured, officially. Perhaps he won't scratch you, you know. He is sometimes rather shy with strangers. Of course, if he gets an antipathy——"

"Rrrrrrrrrr," said Peter, and shot a wicked look at Vazirghian.

The Armenian was now positively green in the face.

"I—I think I'll see if I can't change my cabin," he said hoarsely. "I—I do hope you don't mind my doing so—but I'm rather a nervous man myself, and I need my sleep. Excuse me, please——"

"Of course, my dear fellow, of course—I can understand that quite well," I said very amiably.

"Jaoooooooo," said Peter, to clinch things. His eyes gleamed, and he crouched as though to spring.

Vazirghian rushed out. A steward was coming down with his luggage, and we could hear the Armenian whispering, "No—not in there. Put it somewhere else, wherever you like, but not in there—understand?"

Peter jumped down, threw himself on his bunk, and began to laugh—this time really like a lunatic—hiding his face in the pillows. Suddenly Vazirghian opened the door again—he had forgotten his suitcase. He took one look at Peter's twitching body prostrate on the berth, snatched up his suitcase, and disappeared like a flash. This broke my own resistance too, and there were soon two laughing madmen in that cabin instead of only one.

An hour later a little Japanese officer appeared, smiling amicably, and began talking to us in Japanese. It sounded very nice, but we could not understand a word of it. I asked him in English what we could do for him, but he went on smiling and talking Japanese. His reaction to French and Italian was the same, so I gave it up, but Peter did not.

"*Viatores innocentes sumus*," he said. "*Quid est voluntas tua, amice?*"

I stared at him, now really in doubt about his mental state. But the amazing Japanese said, "*Medicus navis sum. Es-ne aegrotus, amice?*"

"Would you believe it!" I cried, and sat down on my bed. I had spoken German. The Japanese smiled beautifully, and said in excellent German, "We can talk German too if you wish——"

Now Peter too stared at him in speechless amazement.

"I have studied medicine in Leipzig, you know," concluded the Japanese.

We insisted on standing him seven drinks, and after the fourth he told us something of a fair-haired girl in Leipzig. After the seventh a steward came and called him to see another case—a lady in the first class was feeling sea-sick—so we said good-bye with many bows.

"What on earth made you speak to him in pidgin Latin?" I asked Peter.

He grinned. "It was clear enough that our friend Vazirghian was going to do something or other, wasn't it? So this chap was probably the ship's doctor: and a doctor must speak Latin. Elementary, my dear Watson."

"Think he believes you sane now?"

Sherlock Holmes shrugged his shoulders.

"How can I possibly tell what a Japanese thinks about anybody?" he said. "There is only one thing I do know, and that is that I intend to commit a crime, either to-night or to-morrow morning at the very latest."

"All right with me," I said. "What is it? Murder? Arson?"

"Only theft," said Peter. "I'm going to pinch that fellow's scent-bottle and throw it overboard. He's poisoning the atmosphere for at least three degrees of longitude and latitude, and that can't be allowed. Am I right, Bunny?"

"Definitely, A.J.," I said. "I'll be glad to come in on it."

It turned out to be not at all an easy thing to do. Vazirghian had been given quarters with the old Malay and the two Indians, and though he sometimes left the cabin to go on deck one of the others always stayed behind.

At last I seized the opportunity when only the old Malay was left in the cabin. I sent a steward to him with a message that the captain wanted to see him, and when the old man hurried anxiously up on deck Peter nipped in for the scent-bottle, which we duly sacrificed to Father Neptune. The sea god, however, seems to be a man of good

I FOLLOW MY STARS

taste, for he apparently took it as an insult, and sent us one of his most violent storms.

The ship rolled like a drunken sailor for more than twenty-four hours, and then at last old Neptune calmed down again. The sea became dark blue, and the sky grew cloudless, turning at dawn into that indescribably clear green that nobody who has once seen it can forget. It is the first magic trick of the South; to be followed by so many others, and together they induce that strange spell which compels a man to set his steps towards the South again and yet again.

It was twelve years ago that I went to Africa for the first time in my life. Since then I have been there six times, and now again as I write I can feel the spell working. I am longing for the strange green light of the dawn, for the monotonous song of the *sakiye*, the sharp stench of coal-fires, and the rusty red of the mountains. The white sands of Algeria are calling, and the palm-trees heavy with dates. Long-maned little horses with fiery eyes are waiting for me, and from the desert camp of the Bedouins comes the sound of their wild, plangent songs. That is Africa's call, and all who have heard it once have it for ever in their blood; so that I do not think it will be long before I go back there for the seventh time. It will not be long now: I know it.

II

We were thrusting along, still outward bound, near Candia when a homeward bound ship belonging to our line—the Nippon Yusen Kaisha—steamed by. She was a small vessel of perhaps ten thousand tons, black, and with a single funnel, the *Hakone Maru*. On the two ships, one outward and one homeward bound, every one who could be there came out to line the rails. Little multi-coloured flags were run up to the masthead of the *Hakone Maru*, and

her siren howled three times in greeting. The little ship's doctor, the one who had studied in Leipzig, was standing beside me: suddenly he opened his mouth and yelled in a sharp, high-pitched voice, "*Banzai! Banzai! Banzai!*"

At once every Japanese voice chimed in, and suddenly all the expressionless, masklike yellow faces were stirred into excitement and tension, and the slit eyes burned. The *Fushimi's* siren blared out, seeming to echo "*Banzai!*" too, until the greeting was a deafening clangour. Then the *Hakone Maru* passed us by, the Japanese faces became expressionless again, and the perpetual smile of politeness dropped down over them like a curtain.

There is nothing intrinsically extraordinary about that exchange of greetings between two passing ships: it was the sharp contrast between the two facets of the Japanese themselves that so struck my mind into attention. It gave me the feeling of a man who makes the discovery that the peaceful mountain upon which he is walking is in reality a volcano, whose subterranean activity may lead at any moment to violent and frightening eruption. And yet nothing had happened: two ships of the same line had met and greeted one another upon the high seas, and for a second the mask of Japan had been ripped aside by a spontaneous enthusiasm. They are a strange people, the Japanese, whose immense antlike energy has thrown within one generation a bridge across two thousand years. I wondered whether their mental life could possibly keep pace with this incredibly rapid physical progress, and I remembered a story once told to me by a Japanese.

A young and unknown lad in Tokyo asked for and was granted an interview with a multi-millionaire. The young man was set on founding a newspaper; and had come to ask the multi-millionaire to lend him the required capital of half a million yen.

"What kind of security can you offer me?" asked the millionaire.

The young man could offer nothing beyond his energy and his strong belief in himself and his ideas. The millionaire declined the offer.

The next day he received a letter from the young man in which he repeated the offer, but enclosed in the letter was a freshly severed finger from the young man's left hand.

The millionaire thought things over, sent for the young man, and advanced him the amount he needed, saying that he was obliged to feel confidence in anyone who had proved himself willing to make personal sacrifice in the service of his cause.

The newspaper was founded and is still flourishing to the present day.

It is a coincidence that I should have seen the *Hakone Maru* on such a peaceful occasion as her greeting of a passing sister ship, for some considerable time later, in 1936, in fact, I actually sailed in her myself on a by no means peaceful voyage from Marseilles to London through the Spanish waters, then afire with revolution. Dutch ships were not putting in for water at Gibraltar, having been twice shot at by what were presumed to be men-of-war and aeroplanes belonging to Franco, but the *Hakone Maru* was holding to her usual course, and as I did not want to miss seeing Gibraltar again, and did want to see anything I could of the Spanish war, I went with her.

From Malaga came the thundering of heavy guns, and an aeroplane, said to be of Russian origin, was bombing Moorish troops in Algeciras. German men-of-war were reported to be racing full steam ahead round the Spanish coast, and in Lisbon recruits were being enlisted for the junta forces while the battle raged nearer and nearer to Madrid.

There were many fugitives on board the *Hakone Maru*,

and we heard terrible stories of relatives shot dead by anarchists, houses set on fire, and hard-earned money stolen to the last peseta.

I sat up all one night until six o'clock in the morning beside a poor little Portuguese woman who had been married two years before to a Spaniard. They had been living in Barcelona, where her husband owned a factory. This was burned to the ground, her husband had been butchered, and the poor woman was on her way home to her people in Lisbon, penniless. It was a difficult and distressing job to find any words of even remote comfort for such catastrophe. She had even seen burned to the ground the church where she went regularly to pray.

"Why does not God defend His Church?" she asked in despair.

I told her of the Coliseum in Rome, and of the whispering voices of the men, women, and children who had died for their faith nineteen hundred years ago—the voices of the martyrs. Every one of them might have asked the same question—but had they?

"I wish I had died with my husband," said the little Portuguese.

She left the ship at Lisbon, her dark little head bent wearily, and in her widow's veil and long, dark dress she reminded me strangely and poignantly of the Mater Dolorosa.

III

The three days between Naples and Port Said passed quickly for Peter and me. We saw Monsieur Vazirghian only at meals, and even then he satisfactorily kept a wary distance from us.

We made friends with a Japanese variety artist who was travelling third class because he had run short of money. He had had a booking as an illusionist in a London variety

show, but had unfortunately broken his leg on the day before the first performance. He was only three weeks out of hospital, but was already quite all right again, as far as his health was concerned, and he taught me the rudiments of ju-jutsu. I learned how to fall without hurting myself, and mastered a few excellent tricks. I could not do more than that, for real expertness in ju-jutsu means daily training for at least several years.

Peter could not join in the ju-jutsu lessons because his sprained ankle was not yet strong enough, but our Japanese friend gave him a daily massage.

I have often been asked which is the better, ju-jutsu or boxing. The answer is not an easy one. If the boxer knows nothing of ju-jutsu he may very easily lose the fight, for the ju-jutsu man's strongest weapon is surprise. For instance, he throws himself at the feet of the boxer and takes them between his own feet with the dreaded 'scissors' trick. If he succeeds the boxer is finished.

But if the boxer knows something about ju-jutsu, even without being an expert, it ought to be possible for him to keep the ju-jutsu man at a safe distance, and if the boxer can manage to land only once the fight will probably be his. There is one attack, however, in the use of which he must be very cautious, and that is the straight left, for the ju-jutsu man may grasp the fist with both his hands and dislocate the left wrist before the boxer's right hand is able to save it.

The two Indians in Vazirghian's cabins were Hindus, silent, serious-looking men from the hills. Much more interesting was the old Malay, Sinjo Kassim. His English was overwhelmingly funny, but there was always something in what he said, and he said quite a lot.

His home was in Ipoh, in Malacca. His mother came from Atjeh, and he narrated with a certain pride that her tribe had been famous for their prowess as head-hunters.

He had gone to England with an English *tuan*, but his master had died, and now he was going home, a rich man according to his standard.

"What are you going to do with your money?" I asked him.

He smiled.

"What is money, *tuan*? Surely it is but that on which we spend it, isn't it? And we spend it on what gives us pleasure. Money, therefore, is pleasure, *tuan*, that's all."

I do not know what Pierpont Morgan would say to this, but it struck me as an unusual conception, and a nice counterpart to the views held by the camel-lender in Tripoli.

Malays are generally a very light-hearted people: what they have they spend, the quicker the better, and the best way to spend is by betting on cock-fights. Sinjo Kassim had lived in England for twenty-five years, but he was still a Malay.

He told me of a house he wanted to buy in Ipoh, a nice big house, and how before buying it he would make sure it had no *gundrovos* in it. *Gundrovos* are not bugs, nor ants, nor any other sort of insect: they are ghosts, the ghosts of people who have lived in a house and died there. One can meet them apparently even in clear daylight, but without seeing them. They push chairs about, pace up and down the rooms, and sneeze and laugh.

"That must be very uncomfortable, Sinjo Kassim."

"It is not nice," said the old Malay, and shook his turbaned head thoughtfully. Then he looked at me rather sharply. "Why do you doubt my words, *tuan*?" he asked. "I can see that you do not believe me." I shrugged my shoulders.

"I have never seen a ghost yet," I answered. "That does not mean anything, though." The old man nodded.

"But you ought not to be doubtful about these things, *tuan*—just, *you ought not*——"

"What do you mean by that?" I asked. He made me feel rather uneasy.

"Because you are one of those who can talk to ghosts," he said, in a very low voice. "Don't you know that? Oh, no, you don't. You are very young, *tuan*. You don't know yet what power has been given to you over the past and future of mankind. There will be a time, though, when you will use it."

I considered his words. I did not like occult things. I knew of their existence, but I knew too how very little science has discovered on the subject, and how uncertain and dangerous these matters often were. I remembered the staircase in our house in Steglitz, and how I had bolted like a horse when they wanted me to go up. I saw my father climbing up the stairs, deadly pale and staggering, on the day of his death. And my dream of the 'Eagle Man' . . .

Looking up, I saw Sinjo Kassim's smile.

"Yes, *tuan*," he said simply.

We arrived at Port Said, the sleeping town which only wakes when a ship comes in, but wakes then even if it be at 4 A.M. Lights flame up everywhere; every shop is opened, from the postcard vendor's meanest cubby-hole to the glittering palace of Simon Arzt.

The usual crowd of importunate touts trailed our every step ashore, pressing on us the usual cigarettes, scurrilous postcards of the crudest type, genuine scarabs from Czechoslovakia, genuine Oriental carpets from Saxony, and their own twelve- or fourteen-year-old sisters. We successfully gave them the slip and caught our train for Cairo. Four hours later we had taken rooms at the New Khedivial.

Few things I know can equal one's first walk through Cairo. There are the sparkling shops of Nubar Pasha

Street, where fat Indians, mostly Mohammedans, sell jewels of which even Cartier and Lacloche would not be ashamed. There is Shepherd's Hotel, with its famous terrace; there are the palms of the Esbekieh; the elegant Opera square; and five minutes distant from an avenue which can almost compete with the Champs Élysées there are narrow little streets overflowing with natives in multicoloured robes, donkeys, camels, and mules. Even the shops themselves are overflowing with all kinds of vegetables, fruits, carpets, brassware, and their respective swarthy vendors. Seven hundred and seventy-seven different peoples and races pass along those streets. In the *cafés* dignified Bedouins sit smoking their hubble-bubbles; cheek by jowl with them are Greeks studying the racing selections, and Armenians the Stock Exchange lists. They live, as indeed do most of us, for their winnings of the morrow: the Arab for the delights of to-day. I still do not know who is right.

At Groppi's there is the famous mango ice to taste, after which there is the walk across the Kasr-el-Nil bridge to the Ghezira, a park gaudy with brilliant red and green birds and even more brilliantly clothed men and women of all races. From there a tramway leads straight up to Gizeh, but those who dread the entertainment of small insect visitors will do better to take a taxi.

Peter and I had made up our minds to find our way about Cairo without a guide, and we declined the repeated offers of our hall porter and of the hotel guides politely but firmly. But at Shepherd's a squadron of dragomen attacked us, howling, whispering, chirping, and warbling, and we very nearly had to use force to escape them. After Scylla came Charybdis, consisting of literal droves of dragomen lying in ambush near the Continental Hotel, and reinforced by several battalions of shoe-cleaners, who instantly blockaded our feet.

Peter grumbled; I cursed; but it was no use, and we were forced to capitulate. I seized the nearest dragoman and said, "All right—you'll be our guide. First of all, get us out of here."

He was a little man with a thick white moustache and a bowler hat, but he put up a titanic fight, whirling his little arms like the sails of a windmill and yelling like a madman in Arabic. He clove the serried ranks of dragomen and broke the fighting spirit of the shoe-cleaner army.

He got us clear, and then at once became a nuisance. Trotting along, he talked, talked, talked like a waterfall. He was a Jew, and, I think, considered himself the reincarnation of a poor Jewish slave of Pharaoh's times. Straight away in the taxi he launched out about the meanness of the Egyptian kings, who made the poor Jews work without paying them for it. As he looked at us rather suspiciously while saying that, I hurriedly assured him that neither Peter nor I were in any way descendants of the Egyptian kings. He went on cursing them, and when we reached the Pyramids he was still doing so with an amazing fund of eloquence and abuse.

I gave him a stern look.

"Can you keep silence?" I asked in a low voice.

"Like a tomb," he answered, and looked at me expectantly.

"Then do so now," I said, and walked towards the Pyramids.

For more than an hour Peter and I sat in front of them and did not say a word.

The older humanity gets the more mysterious becomes that miracle which is called the Pyramid of Cheops. It has been found that its four corners correspond exactly to the four chief points of the compass, and that, built thousands of years ago, it is constructed according to

architectonic laws which up till now had been considered entirely modern discoveries. There are even those who affirm that the measurements of the different interior chambers and passages are, as it were, an unknown language, and, in fact, give an enlightening sort of prophecy of six thousand years of human history—five of them already past and gone, and one ahead of us. According to that belief, the world entered in September 1936 the 'King's Chamber'—a decisive phase in human history.

We are told that the architect of the Cheops Pyramid was a man of much lighter colour than the earth-brown Egyptians of his day. He was a great favourite with the Pharaoh, and rumour has it that he was an Atlantian, a native of the mysterious land Atlantis which vanished many thousand years ago in some terrific natural cataclysm. Only the highest tops of its mountains are still visible to-day—we call them the Azores. There is this to be said in support of the legend of the lost Atlantis, that it appears in the folklore of almost all the nations, even of those least civilized. We ourselves know it as the legend of the Flood: people have even queried whether Noah himself was an Atlantian.

They must have been an amazingly gifted people, these inhabitants of lost Atlantis, and, as far as civilization is concerned, probably our superiors. It is said that they had machines of all kinds, even to aeroplanes, and I think that the legend of Daedalus and Icarus was nothing other than the report of how two Atlantians, father and son, having saved themselves from the catastrophe which engulfed their land by escaping in their aeroplanes, tried to repair their damaged machines, and crashed in their first attempt to fly again. Some well-known scientists agree with this theory, and maintain that some hundred or so Atlantians must have been in a position to escape, and that they probably did so in different directions. As proof

of this they point out that certain Maya and Aztec temples in the north of South America and in Mexico reveal the same sort of mysterious pictures and signs as do others in Egypt and India. They may be the last attempt, they say, of the Atlantians to transmit their immense knowledge of past and future things to posterity.

Some of the signs carved in the Indian and Aztec temples seem to deal with the Atlantian theory of the origin of the world: they start with a figure like a spiral, and they end with a system of globes turning around one another.

There is a somewhat similar theory held by a German scientist that the world has already passed several times through the periods between the caveman era and that of our modern civilization—each time within a period of about twenty thousand years. At the end of each period he holds that there was some terrific natural catastrophe which destroyed almost everything in its passage. He prophesied that we are now approaching the end of such a period, and, according to his calculations, the catastrophe is due either in 1947 or 1973. The big Flood of the Bible every twenty thousand years. . . .

Of all these things I thought as I sat that day at the foot of the Cheops Pyramid. They were not happy thoughts, but that great monument does not awake happy thoughts; nor does that whole country, for it breathes an age-old melancholy.

A little later, on our way back to Mena House, we met a little group of riders, three men and three girls in polo shirts and breeches, all young, shouting with laughter. They stopped in front of the hotel, fixed up in a few brief sentences for a mixed four at tennis and a game of squash for the two left over. They were Americans, all six of them, healthy, thoughtless, optimistic youngsters, beautiful to watch with their easy, graceful movements.

Peter and I exchanged a quick glance. We two had passed through war, famine, and revolution, and though we were certainly no older than these Americans they made us feel like grandfathers. Our memories held catastrophe, *Götterdämmerung*, and dark, mysterious prophecies, while they enjoyed life to the full.

"Don't say it," I begged Peter. "For God's sake don't tell me that they are superficial and think of nothing but their tennis, while we worry about the depths and heights of life—don't say anything like that, *please*."

"Think I don't know that *they* are right?" snapped Peter.

We travelled second class to Luxor. The train was very crowded, but we were lucky enough to find an empty half-compartment, and so could stow our luggage away. We had quite a lot, because we had brought no 'big' luggage at all. Experience has taught me never to travel with more than I can myself carry in case of emergency: *i.e.*, two small trunks, each of the exact size one is still allowed to take in a railway carriage, plus a small suitcase containing everything likely to be needed for one night. A man can travel round the world with no more than this, and I dare anybody to tell me that he needs more than five suits, evening kit, four pairs of shoes, and two dozen shirts, apart from all the oddments. And these I *do* get into my two small trunks. However, small though our luggage was, it pretty well filled our little half-compartment, and we were glad of that, as we were the less likely to get other passengers coming in with us. I proposed to toss up which of us should sleep on the seat and which on the floor, but Peter big-heartedly waived his claim to the seat and made himself a bed on the floor with his trench-coat as a mattress and his coat as a pillow. I did likewise on my seat, and we went to sleep pretty well at once.

At a little station I woke up suddenly: heavy footsteps were coming along the corridor. I saw that Peter was awake too and looking anxious, for if anyone did come in we could say good-night to any more sleep. Some one did come in, sure enough—an Arab in a long whitish *djelaba*, but I shut my eyes firmly, deciding to try ostrich tactics. I even went so far as to snore.

The Arab muttered something which must have been a request for a seat, but Peter jumped to his feet like an equilibrist.

"*Shshshshshshsh!*" he said, and put a warning finger to his lips. Then he nodded in my direction and, rolling his eyes, whispered, "Pasha! Pasha!"

The Arab looked bewildered. I do not know if he was stupid enough to believe that a pasha was travelling second class to Luxor, or if the whispering Peter was as frightening to him as he had been to Monsieur Vazirghian, but in any case he withdrew.

We settled down contentedly again, but after a while the door was opened, very slowly and cautiously this time, and the Arab looked in. I saw his eyes sparkling, and wondered if he had come to make sure that we were asleep in order to come in and rob us, but he only pushed something into our compartment, a longish, dark thing—a parcel—no—a chest, a case.

Peter grunted something, and the Arab withdrew quickly and closed the door.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Not the foggiest," grunted Peter.

We settled down again, but after a while I heard a strange noise, a sort of hoarse crowing, and immediately afterwards Peter shouted:

"*Himmelherrgottkruzitürkenscheissverdammichnochmal!*"

"What on earth——" I asked.

"Something's bitten me!" hissed Peter.

"Bitten you?"

"Yes, bitten me, blast it!"

"All right," I said. "Don't get so worked up about it!"

"Nothing all right about it," snapped Peter.

"It's probably a flea," I said. "One's got to get used to that out here."

"That was no flea," said Peter. "Ouch—it's done it again! It's coming out of that blasted chest!"

That made me take the thing seriously: there might be snakes in the chest the mysterious Arab had put in with us. But snakes do not usually crow. I had to solve the mystery, so I switched the light on.

The chest was full of chickens, live chickens, more than a dozen of them, crowded horribly together. The practical-minded Arab had evidently bedded them out in our compartment, preferring that they should disturb our sleep rather than his own.

Peter cursed furiously, and I will do him the justice of admitting that it is extremely unpleasant to be pecked viciously at from behind by a dozen Egyptian chickens in the middle of the night. I opened the door and tried to push the chest out, but I could not: right outside the door were no less than ten similar chests all similarly filled with live chickens, the freight, obviously, of an Arab poultry-dealer.

"Nothing doing," I said, shrugging my shoulders.

We tried to put the birds up in the rack, but there was no room left.

"All right," said Peter fatalistically. "I'll manage somehow."

"You can always peck back," I said, and settled down on my seat again.

I do not know if he got any sleep, but I found him in the morning on top of his largest trunk: he had rolled himself up like a python.

In Luxor we adopted quite new tactics, stayed at the Winter Palace, and thus became for a week or so *voyageurs de luxe*.

Our guide was a Copt, Said Tanius, a quiet old man with very dignified movements who might well have stepped straight out of the Old Testament. With him we went on the famous ride to the Valley of Kings—on donkeys. Mine, by the way, was called "Telephone," and Peter's "Chocolate." I am rather on the heavy side, and Telephone was so small that I only had to stretch out my legs to touch the ground. But he trotted on and on, and he was the only telephone which has never made me impatient and on which I was never cut off.

The Valley of the Kings is a sinister place. There they all are, the men who ruled Egypt, and who won and lost wars—diplomats and soldiers, tyrants and rulers of blessed memory—in their tombs, surrounded by cloven rocks—yellow mummies with claw-like hands. Many of them were weak and enfeebled through inbreeding—some of them had even married their own sisters—but they had been kings with a more absolute power than any king of our times has ever possessed.

Since they were sacred persons, and it was therefore the custom to put treasures as well as food and wine into their tombs, it would not really be such a surprising thing if these tombs were, as so many people believe they are, protected by certain measures of precaution. The care of the tombs was, after all, in the hands of the priests, and it was the priests who brought Egyptian medical science to such an advanced state: they were, above all, specialists in toxicology, and their knowledge they undoubtedly put to many and diverse uses. They themselves had put over the entrances of the tombs inscriptions which were a warning to and at the same time a curse on any violator. It seems but logical to

assume that they would be *bound* to ensure that their warning should be respected.

Our guide, Said Tanius, had himself been present when Lord Carnarvon opened the tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen. A poisonous insect had stung him as he entered the tomb, said Said Tanius. The query is inevitable as to whether a living insect can remain sealed up in an airtight chamber for thousands of years. But the indisputable fact remains that many other people who have entered a royal tomb have also subsequently died.

There is an uncanny flavour in the whole subject, raising inevitably the question as to whether it is supernatural, occult, or magic. It may equally be none of these, for in Egyptian tombs there has been found wheat whose living germ was not extinct: the seeds sprouted when planted in good earth. If grains of wheat survive the centuries, so too may poison.

I am very far from denying occult influence, and have long since ceased to laugh and shrug at the so-called 'supernatural'—which, incidentally, should, in my opinion, be called the 'supernormal'—and that will be the case with most people who have lived long in the East. But the mystery of Tut-ankh-Amen's tomb is, in my opinion, a simple case of murder by poisoning: cold-blooded murder, planned many thousands of years ago, of any man who would disturb the peace of the dead rulers.

IV

I visited the Valley of the Kings once again two years later, this time with Putti, and again dear old Said Tanius was our guide. Something happened on this visit that no author of fiction would dare to invent.

We wanted, of course, to see the tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen, although there was only the sarcophagus in it, the

mummy and all the treasures having been taken to the Arabian museum in Cairo. When we arrived a guard told us that we should have to wait, as some other visitors were in the tomb, and there was not room enough for all of us to go in at once. So we waited, and after a little while the visitors came out—four of them, and a guide. The four visitors were father, mother, son, and daughter, and were the very same family in whose house I had met Putti for the first time. They had no idea we were in Egypt, and we did not know either that they were there. And, as if that was not enough, the coincidence repeated itself when, weeks later, we met the same family again in a wonderful little church in Venice. And yet we had gone there by entirely different routes: they had gone back to Cairo and from there to Palestine, while we first went up the Nile to Assuan and Shellal, through Nubia to Haifa, and then embarked at Alexandria for Venice.

The author of fiction in myself revolted against the unlikeliness of such a coincidence, the kind that one would never dare to offer in a novel; yet it does prove once again that fiction must be treated differently from fact, and that the exponents in my profession of true-to-life realism, whose *bête noire* is making something happen in a book which would have turned out differently in real life, are nothing more than the photographers of literature.

Putti and I did not like Assuan at all: here the attractive age-old melancholy of Egypt became a weary depression, and that feeling was increased by a strange and hollow sort of noise, like a far-off moaning of voices, which was audible all day long. It came from the island Elephantine in the middle of the river.

"I've got to know what it is," I said, and we took a boat and crossed the river.

TIME OF TRAVEL

The noise grew louder and louder, and it did not sound like voices any more: it had become a huge orchestra, led by an invisible conductor, and playing the strangest symphony I had ever heard. Giant flutes were playing in it, exotic drums, and weary violins; sometimes the melody swelled up to terrifying strength; then it expired in a lamenting *pianissimo*.

Putti and I stared at each other without a word, for we could not make out where the strange music was coming from. Then suddenly we saw the instruments and the players: they were *sakiyes*, the open wells from which the *fellaheen* draw their water. The wooden wheels are turned by camels and cattle who move perpetually round and round under the guidance of a silent native, their eyes blinded or covered so that they shall not grow dizzy.

It was the moaning of these wheels which had made the music of our 'orchestra.' Every *sakiye* has a voice of its own, but they all sing the same melody, and suddenly I recognized that here was the origin of all Arabian music: monotonous, wailing, and always the same melody in always renewed variations.

V

I did not go to Assuan with Peter. After Luxor we sailed from Alexandria in an old Messageries Maritimes boat for Jaffa, Beirut, Smyrna, and Stamboul.

We went second class, and were very glad we did not travel first, for the only passengers there were an old French general with his staff and their wives. The General talked shop with his staff all day long, while the wives sat round the General's sour-looking wife sewing. Life in a Trappist monastery would have seemed thoroughly bohemian in comparison.

The second-class passengers were at least amusing.

There were a few young Englishmen and Danes on a sightseeing trip to Palestine, half a dozen commercial travellers, with a minimum of manners and a maximum of pomade on their hair, and Florentine and Mimi.

Our *bête noire* was a commercial traveller of the Vazirghian tribe and with the same strange predilection for cheap scent. He was the noisiest eater I have ever heard, and his table manners left much to be desired in other directions. One cool day, for instance, he came in to dinner in his burberry and wearing a cap. The Englishmen stared at him in amazement, and Peter and I rose as though in obedience to an unheard command and went along to the purser's office.

We had already come to like the purser, who was the descendant of a very old French family, having the right to inscribe the seven-pointed crown of a baron above his name. Goodness knows what sort of mishap had forced him to become a purser in a third-class liner. He was good company, for he had seen a lot of the world, and we often used to drop in for a chat.

We asked him to lend us his two topees, which he readily did, though they were far too big for Peter and far too small for me. We put them on, however, returned forthwith to the dining-room, and sat down one on each side of the be-capped commercial traveller. There was a cascade of forced coughing from the Englishmen, who did their utmost not to laugh, and only openly succumbed when we ourselves could not hold in our mirth any longer. Our headgear achieved its purpose however, for never again did our friend appear at dinner so unorthodoxly clad.

A few days before coming in to Jaffa the Englishmen arranged some boxing fights. They had no heavyweight, which excluded my taking part, but Peter was a lightweight, and so was one of the Danes. The Dane did

quite a lot of boasting on the evening before the fight, saying that he would knock Peter out before the second round, and so on and so forth. Peter, of course, was told of this, and decided to put up his best show, which turned out far too good a one as far as the Dane's nose was concerned. In the end the wretched fellow had to be carried ashore on a stretcher, at which Peter was so distressed that I had to comfort him as if he had committed a murder.

We were not able to land at Beirut, having no *visas* for Syria, but they let us loose at Smyrna after half an hour's examination by not less than a dozen heavily armed police officers. There was a certain amount of tension between France and Turkey in those days, and an odd result of this was that they even asked us for the Christian names of our grandparents. We gave them, with full details, and so may be considered to have done our bit towards world peace.

Smyrna of 1926 was a sorry sight. I had expected something like an Oriental fairy city with beautiful carpets hanging to the very sea. Instead of that there was a front of half-ruined houses, looking like nothing so much as targets for artillery practice, which, of course, the city had been some years earlier in the war between the Turks and the Greeks which Kemal Pasha, now Ataturk—or, as Bernard Shaw calls him, Whataturk—concluded so successfully in favour of his own nation.

Ataturk is a man of astounding energy and will-power, and I have no doubt that Smyrna has grown to look very different during the last ten years. But when Peter and I were there it was rather depressing, with its dirty streets and even dirtier people. We found a little restaurant and had some exquisite *café turque*, surrounded by Greeks, Jews, Armenians, and Frenchmen, with an occasional Turk among them.

And then a woman came in and took our breath away. She was one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen: milk-white skin, vivid red lips, and eyes of that shadowy depth which only first-class adventuresses in second-class novels ever seem to possess.

"That's not a woman," I whispered to Peter. "That's a living jacket for an adventure story."

But the jacket walked—glided, rather—and on very lovely legs. She looked round the *café* for some one, apparently without success, for she turned again and left, her every movement perfect harmony.

Not thirty seconds later Peter and I were also outside, following her. She crossed a little square, reached a house with a garden in front of it, and went in, obsequiously received at the door by a male servant. That is all. We never saw her again, and we could not even find out who she was, for our boat was leaving at midnight. All we know is that she was lovely beyond belief—probably an Oriental, in spite of her Paris clothes.

In the evening we had to go to the theatre for Mimi and Florentine's opening night. A promise is a promise, but we left after one act, and after strolling a while went into rather a rough *café* near the docks. While we were there a drunken sailor ran amok. He shot a fat Turk in the shoulder before I could get his gun, and Peter nearly choked him. I was not quite quick enough, and his second shot went smashing up into the monstrous imitation Venetian candelabrum and finished it. I think that was the best piece of work I did the whole time I was abroad, for no eye can ever again be offended by that monstrosity. The sailor, as far as I remember, was arrested.

We went back on board and turned in. I tried hard to sleep. Then: "Peter, do you think that that woman in the restaurant——"

"Shut up," snapped Peter. "I've been trying to get her out of my mind for ages, and had just managed to concentrate on that foul fish we had for lunch. You *would* remind me of her——"

"Good night," I said.

Milk-white skin and lips of vivid red. And eyes—Lord, what eyes . . . !

VI

In the Dardanelles the purser pointed out to us the wreck of the French battle-cruiser *Bouvet*, called the 'Society battle-cruiser,' sunk with the flower of French youth on board. The Turks had left her where she was, and every ship entering the Dardanelles had to pass by that tragic wreck.

When we reached Stamboul we could only stay for twenty-four hours, for Peter's holiday was over, and I was longing to get back to work. We explored the town a bit, and then I telephoned my old friend Luca Orsini Baroni, then Italian ambassador in Turkey, and later in Berlin. Orsini had been attached to the Legation in Berne when, many years before, an Italian subject had to be deported from Switzerland as an undesirable alien. The name of the undesirable alien was Benito Mussolini, at that time an ardent socialist. When Mussolini came to power Orsini probably thought his diplomatic career had reached its end, but, on the contrary, Mussolini appointed him ambassador.

We had a delightful dinner at the Embassy, and after dinner we began to discuss politics. I asked rather a silly question about the political opposition in Turkey, and Orsini smiled.

"There are two sorts of opposition in this country," he said. "The official one and the unofficial one. The official one has been silenced."

"And the unofficial one?"

"Hanged," said Orsini cheerfully.

Next day we took the Orient Express. I was rather annoyed because the Turkish Customs officials had made me pay quite a large sum of money on a little brass-topped table which I had bought in Chan Chalil in Cairo, and the same thing happened at the Bulgarian frontier, and a little later at the Yugoslavian too. I nearly threw the wretched table out of the window, but, having invested so much in it already, I had not the heart to do so. Resignedly I paid on it again at the Hungarian frontier; with steadily rising anger at the Czechoslovakian; and, literally foaming, at the German. And the very day after my return I saw exactly the same table in the window of a furniture shop. Its price was a little less than a third of what I had paid for mine: only a little less, though.

ASTROLOGY CHANGES MY LIFE

I laugh at astrology—Baron von Hoogerwoerd casts my first horoscope—"Your birth-hour is wrong!"—An extraordinary incident—From scepticism to faith—What astrology can and cannot do—Astrology and religion—Aspects—A neglected warning results in thirteen years' hard labour—I sin against my horoscope and learn to respect Mercury.

ACTUALLY I wanted to play bridge: the Club had Arung me up to say that there were some very good players waiting to make up tables, and they wanted Putti and me to go along.

We had, however, promised to go to Dengerode's party, and Putti was firm that a promise was a promise. She is very meticulous about that sort of thing, and also hates disappointing people. I usually prefer to disappoint people rather than be bored by them, but in these things the decision is always left to Putti. Besides, Dengerode had telephoned again, just to make sure that we were coming. He said it would be one of his most interesting evenings and might surprise us.

Dengerode, a young composer, is a sort of bohemian *de luxe*, and no one ever knows quite what the *pièce de résistance* at a party of his is going to be. For instance, he once staged an all-in wrestling match between a well-known actor and a young novelist. The actor's weight was eighteen stone, the novelist's only sixteen, but he made good the difference by some knowledge of ju-jutsu. The fight lasted for nearly thirty minutes, and I had to spend the better part of the following day in bed, comforted only by the news that my opponent was 'in' for two days. A little ju-jutsu is worth more than two

stone of flesh and fat with an occasional muscle in between.

For another party Dengerode had got hold of 'The King of all Arabian Conjurers,' a flat-footed, dusky, oily-haired gentleman blessed with the name of Ali ben Barud ibn Djuwali. In those days I did not speak much Arabic, and was probably of a far less suspicious nature than I am to-day. It so happened that I believed in Ali ben Barud ibn Djuwali's being the genuine article, as also did the rest of the party. He was an amazing conjurer, anyhow: he produced six live chickens from Putti's tip-tilted nose, changed a five-mark piece into a greasy button—strangely enough, the reverse would be a crime—and performed some exceptionally clever card tricks. On our way home, however, I discovered the regrettable fact that my watch had disappeared, and, as I learned next morning, mine constituted exactly 20 per cent. of the missing watches. They never reappeared; nor did the ubiquitous Ali ben Barud ibn Djuwali.

Thus Dengerode's evening parties *were* sometimes rather unusual ones.

That evening he received us in the anteroom, very excited.

"Jensen is here," he whispered. "Jensen is a phenomenon."

I racked my brains to remember who Jensen could be, but I did not succeed, nor did Putti. We went into the drawing-room, where some seventeen or eighteen people were already waiting. Most of them were old women of both sexes—soft, creamy-dreamy creatures of the type I most dislike. There were also some painters, a writer of lyrics, an architect, and, apart from two or three pretty women—one can always count on *that* with Dengerode—a whole collection of elderly females with excited, startled eyes and compressed lips.

Facing us stood a long thin figure: the phenomenon Jensen to whom Dengerode at once introduced us. The phenomenon Jensen had a completely bald head shaped exactly like an egg, watery blue eyes, and a croaking voice. His fingernails were bitten, and his clothes hung round him as though in a state of chronic depression. The phenomenon Jensen was not much to look at.

"Can I start now?" he asked of Dengerode.

He nodded, and Jensen started: "My dear friends, last time we discussed the significance of the eleventh house—the house of friends. To-day we proceed to the twelfth—the house of enemies."

I glanced at Putti: she made a face, and so did I. This was obviously not Jensen's first performance here, and the others seemed to know more about it all than we did. We were completely at sea, did not even know what kind of houses he was talking about, and the whole thing savoured to me of a kind of oily mysticism.

Jensen talked on, all about 'house-cusps,' to which their 'ruling planets' gave a certain significance; of a 'malignant Saturn'; of something or somebody being 'retrograde'; and of 'trigons' and 'sextiles.' Only when he mentioned the word 'horoscope' did I suddenly realize what it was all about.

"Astrology," I whispered to Putti.

She wrinkled her little nose like a rabbit, and I agreed with her entirely: I was immensely scornful of people who really believed in that sort of medieval rubbish.

Jensen went on talking, and the more he said the less I understood. I could make no sense of why a quincunx should be a rather neutral angle, and a square something decidedly hostile. I considered it as an insult when he told a dignified old lady of sixty-five that her moon was an unquiet one and her Mars in a state of destruction. He might have been right, I thought, but why rub it in?

Next he told us that Venus was elevated in the sign of the Fishes, and promised the lyric poet that this was the case in his horoscope. The poet blushed bashfully and said in a choked voice, "I have always felt that!"

This was too much for Putti, and she coughed with considerable vigour to hide a fit of laughing.

Five minutes later Dengerode was merciful enough to announce an interval. The star fanatics rushed to the refreshment room, and we seized the opportunity to slip out. The last I saw of the phenomenon Jensen was that he was stuffing a whole egg into his mouth.

In the anteroom I said to the parlour-maid, "Please make our excuses to Mr Dengerode; we want to slip away without making a disturbance. Tell him that I'm very sorry, but I've got a very important quincunx with somebody in the first house, and he will understand that I can't miss that—at least, I hope he will!"

All the way home we talked in astrological jargon.

"I've got to lighten myself a big trigon after this," I said.

"You've already had eleven to-day," complained Putti. "If you go on like that you'll only go and get an unquiet moon."

"Then I shall move," I said emphatically. "In the twelfth house I shall be safe enough. And don't try and veto an innocent pleasure, or I shall become very retrograde indeed!"

If on that evening anyone had told me that I myself would one day study astrology, and seriously too, I should have laughed in his face. At that time I genuinely put astrological believers on a par with common or garden lunatics.

Six months later I met an old acquaintance at the Annual Dutch Ball at the Hotel Esplanade: Prince Henry of Holland, Prince Consort of Queen Wilhelmina. I was

then introduced to a lady-in-waiting, Baroness Keun von Hoogerwoerd, and she called her son to meet me.

"His profession will interest you as a writer," said the dear old lady. "He is an astrologer."

I looked rather bewildered: indeed, I was considerably taken aback at the idea of the son of a lady-in-waiting at the Dutch Court playing quack and telling fortunes.

He came up, and I had a good look at him. Baron Keun von Hoogerwoerd was a strong, thick-set man in his early thirties, with black hair and big, round, black eyes, and he had a certain pompous dignity which suited his stout build remarkably well.

After five minutes I thought him a good-natured fool: after a quarter of an hour I realized that this man could not be summed up in a quarter of an hour. He gave short, cautious answers, and had a strange way of looking at people. This latter I have, as a matter of fact, grown always to use myself now. It is a natural and not a forced habit, for it is the searching look of the adept in astrology who, quite mechanically, registers the astrological type of any person to whom he is speaking.

I took the bull by the horns and explained to Baron von Hoogerwoerd that his mother had told me of his profession, and added that I was a complete sceptic. I also told him all about the phenomenon Jensen (of whom he had never heard), and what kind of impression the whole business had made on me.

Baron von Hoogerwoerd smiled.

"We are in a rather difficult position," he said. "Or I should say astrology is in a rather difficult position. So many unauthorized people interfere with it—ignoramuses, dilettantes, and quacks. Ours is almost worse than the medical profession in that respect."

I liked that: it showed the Baron had a definite sense of humour.

"Come on," I said. "Let's go to the bar and have a quick one while you tell me all about your planets."

Later on I realized the monstrous idiocy of my suggestion that some one should tell a man all about astrology while having a couple of drinks at the bar.

Hoogerwoerd looked at me as the Shah of Persia might look at an American who has cheerfully asked him to lend him the Crown Jewels for a fancy-dress ball. The comparison is actually not so far-fetched, for Hoogerwoerd has a Persian grandmother.

"You don't know anything about astrology?" he asked at the bar.

"Only a very little—old Babylonians, Egyptians, Kepler, Nostradamus, Wallenstein, and Seni—that's all, I'm afraid."

"You are, of course, an Aquarius born," said Hoogerwoerd thoughtfully. "So you will understand quickly."

"I'm of course a *what*?"

"An Aquarius born. Is not your birthday between the twentieth of January and the twentieth of February?"

I nodded, and at his request gave him the exact date. He produced a little pocket-book and looked at a sort of table. Then he beamed.

"I knew I should meet somebody to-day who would be very important to me," he said delightfully. "And now I am quite sure it is you. I have compared our horoscopes."

"As quickly as all that? I thought you needed days to cast a horoscope!"

"I've only compared the position of the main planets. Your Moon has a trigon to my . . ."

"Please don't," I interrupted wildly. "That's the Jensen business all over again. I shall become very retrograde if you go on."

Hoogerwoerd laughed without any sign of offence.

"Let's start the thing from a practical point of view,"

he said. "Do you want me to give you an exact study of your own character, and then tell you when you were lucky and when not?"

"You can do that?"

"Of course I can."

As I looked at him I felt certain that this heavy man with his large, deep, black eyes was hypersensitive like myself, and that he therefore very probably felt or guessed people's characters intuitively. He quite likely knew one or two things about me too.

"As a matter of fact, I have read three of your books," said Hoogerwoerd before I could speak, "and naturally I know who you are. You had better give me the birth date of somebody else. But make it a person you know very well, so that you will be in a position to check up on my words."

I at once gave him the date of Dengerode's birth, which I happened to know because I had been at his birthday party three or four days before. Hoogerwoerd looked at his tables again, and made some calculations. Then he started: "A very interesting person—very interesting indeed. He has strong artistic feelings, but is strangely absent-minded, distracted, and not at all consistent. He does not know how to use his talent in a practical way, and he does too many different things at once. He is interested in everything, but not enough in any one of them. He is like a child, grasping a toy, dropping it, and grasping the next one. Very musical indeed, this man. He ought to be a musician, and a creative one too—a composer, for instance, not a conductor. Women mean much to him, and he shows excellent taste in their choice. But the women will not as a rule take him seriously—and I can understand that. He will never lack money entirely. Whenever he is in a precarious situation there will be some sort of help from another source—

even quite unexpected help. Only ten days ago a situation of this sort ought to have arisen."

"Stop it," I said. My head was whirling, for not only were these Dengerode's chief characteristics, but he had told me on his birthday that he had unexpectedly inherited eighty thousand marks just a week earlier. "I needed them badly too," he had added. "I really did not know how to carry on. But that's always the same old story with me. If there's no way out I suddenly find that I've inherited something—and from the most impossible sources. Funny, eh?"

Was there really something in this crazy star business? Or was this fellow doing some sort of thought-reading?

I looked at him sharply. "Please wait," I said. "I'll be back in a minute."

I rushed to the ballroom and asked Putti for the birth date of an old school friend of hers whom I had never met. Then I went back to Hoogerwoerd, who smiled a little, but did not in the least mind writing down what he would say about a person born on this date. I took the paper, went back to the ballroom, and showed Putti the result.

She went quite white.

"But this is absolutely exact!" she said. "I couldn't describe her better myself."

I went back to Hoogerwoerd.

"Would you be kind enough to cast my horoscope?" I asked.

The young Dutchman nodded: he had expected that.

"Send me your exact date, please," he said. "Day, month, year, place, and hour of your birth—the hour as exact as possible."

I telephoned to my mother the first thing in the morning, and she told me that I had been born at 7.30 P.M.

Hoogerwoerd got his date, and a week later I got my first horoscope—nearly twenty pages of typing. First,

the characteristics. I thought it a bit *à l'eau de rose*, but it was excellent all the same. Of course he had noticed that I was 'psychic'—just as had old Sinjo Kassim on board the *Fushimi Maru*. Then followed an analysis of my capabilities and the possibilities of their development in life; and finally the good and bad aspects of the next twelve months. On the first page was the so-called astrological 'watch,' a drawing showing the twelve signs of the Zodiac which include all human doings, the twelve 'houses' I once thought so ridiculous, and the positions of the planets at the moment of my birth.

For a long time I stared at the strange and mysterious drawing which brought me, a short-lived human being, into such close connexion with the macrocosmos. I was not yet convinced—far from it—but the mysterious medieval oddity of the business attracted me like the sound of some very old and half-forgotten melody. I made up my mind to try a few experiments.

A few weeks later I began to have my first experiences: the aspects worked like clockwork; business matters went through or failed just as predicted in the horoscope; I met important people unexpectedly on the days when the horoscope said that I would meet them. Everything was right, except for one item.

I had, just as Hoogerwoerd told me, a strong predisposition to catching colds, but if my horoscope warned me of the seventeenth as the dangerous day for catching one I did not get it on that day, but on the eighteenth or nineteenth. That happened to me twice in three months, and I told Hoogerwoerd about it.

He frowned.

"I'm afraid the hour of your birth is not exact," he said. "You told me seven-thirty P.M. From what you tell me now it would appear that you were born a quarter of an hour later—at seven-forty-five P.M."

I referred him to the information supplied by my mother, who is a very methodical, even pedantic, old lady, and who had at any rate been personally present on the occasion in question. But my astrologer was not so easily convinced.

"Let's make a test," he said. "If your old birth hour of seven-thirty is correct, then to-morrow, Sunday, at half-past ten you have the aspect Mars square ascendant. That usually brings a sharp bodily pain of some kind or another. Just watch exactly when it does come and let me know."

"All right," I said, rather reluctantly.

I did not care much for this sort of experiment: astrology might be quite a good thing, but the idea of spending a nice bright Sunday morning waiting for a sharp bodily pain held out no particularly attractive prospect. I decided to show Mars square ascendant the coldest of cold shoulders, played bridge on Saturday night until three o'clock in the morning, and woke up at eleven.

In a very cheerful mood I went into the bathroom, had a bath, and started shaving, but somehow or other I cut myself rather deeply on the right cheek. Angrily I changed the blade in my safety razor for a new one, and *cut myself on the left cheek*. And all this with a safety razor. I examined the razor closely: one of the little teeth was broken. The maid had dropped it, as she afterwards confessed.

With two tattoo-marks on my cheeks like a Shilluk warrior, I rushed to the telephone. Hoogerwoerd was at home.

"Your confounded aspect just dropped in five minutes ago," I said furiously. "I'm bleeding like a pig."

"Excellent," said Hoogerwoerd, in a tone of the greatest satisfaction.

He calculated, and then said, "Well, there we are; you were born at exactly seven-forty-five P.M."

"All right," I said. "Give Mars my kind regards, and tell him that in future I should like him to leave my ascendant in peace."

I rang off, but still I was not convinced. My mother had always been so reliable about dates and things, and this particular one had had a certain significance in her life.

Then suddenly it came to my mind that I had mentioned Berlin to Hoogerwoerd as the place of my birth. But actually I was born in a suburb of Berlin—Berlin-Wilmersdorf. I knew that there was a special registrar's office there, and that in the registrar's office is a record of the exact date of everybody's birth, correct to within a quarter of an hour.

On Monday morning I paid a visit to this registrar's office, and for something like twopence I received permission to look up the original registration of my birth.

There it was: 7.45 P.M.

This little and somewhat ridiculous incident led to a very decisive turning-point in my life—and in the lives of other people. I had a long and very serious discussion with Hoogerwoerd, a discussion I have often since repeated, but this time in the *rôle* of consultant myself.

"I think," I said to Hoogerwoerd, "that there must be something in astrology after all, but I don't see clearly on one or two points—vital points."

"Ask me anything you like," said Hoogerwoerd simply.

"Well, for instance, I have built up the whole of my life myself. I don't owe anything to family influence, outside help, or anything of that kind, and I should find it unbearable to have to think now that I owe everything I have done, not to my own energy and will-power and

my own work, but to some predetermined influence exerted by such and such combination of planets."

Hoogerwoerd shook his head.

"You do nothing of the kind. *The greater part of our destiny is dependent upon ourselves.* Let's put it in ordinary business language—sixty per cent. of our life depends on will, energy, and the struggle against our own natural laziness. We are not the puppets of the planets. We are free—not like a stone which is in reality thrown, yet imagines itself to be flying. We are really free. But we *are* influenced by the tendencies of the planets."

"Tendencies," I said thoughtfully. "No force. And these tendencies alone are predetermined and predictable."

"That's right. What's more, you can force the positive tendencies by using your utmost amount of activity and diminish or even avoid the negative ones by remaining passive. Everybody has felt that at some period of his life he was lucky or unlucky. Well, *we* know *when* we are going to be lucky and when unlucky."

"I see. Then it's impossible to predict what actually will happen, but only what sort of tendencies will approach us."

"Exactly. But in many cases the statement of the clear facts is obvious. One is, as it were, in the position of a general who has at his call an excellent secret service. He will be informed in time about the movement of the enemy—and of every movement of the allies too. That's why there is nothing so stupid as the outlook I so often meet which says: 'I don't want to know what will happen to me. If it's coming I shall have to fight anyhow—if I can fight it at all.' That's politics *à la* ostrich, nothing else."

"Is it possible to predict the day of somebody's death by astrology?"

"No. It is only possible to see if there is any likelihood of a death before one's natural time—a death by accident, for instance. A possibility, mind you, not a certainty. There is no such thing as certainty in this matter. But if there is a likelihood, then it is avoidable in nearly every single case. The number of people who would have continued to live if they had been astrologically advised is legion."

"And in the case of a war, for instance?"

Hoogerwoerd raised his bushy eyebrows.

"The tendency of a war can be calculated by the help of the so-called mundane astrology. The danger-point is naturally heavily increased for everybody, whatever his personal horoscope may be. But it will be diminished or increased in proportion to the strength of the single horoscope, and in proportion to the momentary aspects of the native. The miraculous escapes from an inevitable death of which we so often hear is bound up with the protecting aspects in its effects."

I shook my head.

"And what do religious people think about this opinion of yours? You exclude God—His help—His mercy——"

"I do nothing of the kind," replied Hoogerwoerd, almost angrily. "Astrology and religion have never been opposed, but are supplementary. My own private opinion in this case is irrelevant, but there is just as little reason for a faithful Christian or Jew to avoid astrology as there is for him to avoid putting a lightning-conductor on the roof of his house."

I smiled.

"I have heard of narrow-minded people who call it impiety to do just that."

Hoogerwoerd nodded grimly.

"Narrow-minded people call lots of things impiety because they themselves cannot conceive of a God who is

more intelligent than they are. They will never understand that that is the real impiety. . . . You mentioned the War. It may interest you to know that there are certain types of people, as we know from experience, who are definitely lucky in war—luckier than the others. People born under Aries or Scorpio, *i.e.*, between the twentieth of March and the twentieth of April, and between the twenty-fourth of October and the twenty-second of November. When General Tilly laid siege to the fortified town of Magdeburg in the Thirty Years War he was amazed by the resistance of the besieged. His astrologer advised him to collect all soldiers born under the sign of Aries and Scorpio and to use them as 'shock-troops.' Tilly followed that advice, and the Aries and Scorpio men invaded the town, after a short fight, with hardly any losses at all. The bulk of the army followed, and Magdeburg was conquered. By the way, men born under those two signs are mostly excellent soldiers."

"Why did not the astrologer Seni warn his master Wallenstein of the danger of his being murdered? Surely he ought to have seen that aspect in his horoscope!"

Hoogerwoerd laughed good-naturedly.

"I'm afraid that was a bit before my time. But there are historians who affirm that Seni did warn his master all right, but that Wallenstein neglected the warning. There are others who claim to have proofs that Seni was bribed by the Imperial headquarters to hide the truth from Wallenstein. And there is another and undeniable fact: at that time the astrologers did not know of the existence of three planets which have been discovered since: Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto."

"This may sound rather silly," I said, "but ought not two children born on the same day, at the same hour, and in the same place to have the same destiny too?"

"Now you haven't thought that out," said Hoogerwoerd. "You know very well that sixty per cent. of our destiny depends on our free will. The actual strength of will even may be the same with your two children. They will often make the same decisions—but sometimes they may not, and their lives change as a result. The dates of their lucky and unlucky periods will, of course, coincide, but there is one thing you must never forget—astrology is *one* strong influence in people's lives, but not the *only* one. There is the whole question of characteristics handed down by our parents, grandparents, and so on. There is religion. There is first love, which is especially important in a woman's life—so many influences. An ordinary cold in the head can change whole resolutions by its irritating influence."

"Well, let's take the case of twins. Their education and religion are the same. They have the same parents and grandparents."

"They may not have inherited the same gifts, though. Still, that is not my concern. Astrologically I have to state that their will is free, and consequently their resolutions also. And, of course, there is still the question of the interval between their births. Five minutes more or five minutes less can make all the difference, especially if their ascendant has changed."

"What actually is an ascendant?"

"Every sign of the Zodiac is divided into thirty degrees. The degree of the respective sign rising in the east in the very moment of your birth is your ascendant, and the starting point of your whole horoscope. Two different ascendants, and the whole horoscope changes. It may not change much, though it *can* do so. Anyhow, it changes. One of your twins may perish in a fire—the other may escape."

I nodded.

I FOLLOW MY STARS

"I understand. And there are, of course, unusually lucky and unusually unlucky horoscopes?"

"Of course there are. In medieval times, the so-called 'Dark Ages,' it was a matter of course to cast a horoscope for every newborn child. If it was a very bad one, and there was reason to believe that the child was bound to have a weary, hopeless sort of life, they used to put it in a monastery or convent to become a monk or nun. In that way it would be protected against all dangers."

"How so? Aren't astrological aspects strong enough to pierce the wall of a monastery?"

"Aspects are tendencies, and life in a monastery does not afford many possibilities of attack. It is of no importance to a monk that he would have been a failure in business matters. A nun may not want to be successful in love—so neither of them will be disappointed. The monk will not go bankrupt, because he won't have any opportunity of doing so; the nun will not marry—so her husband will not ill-treat or deceive her."

I nodded again.

"Sounds logical enough. But I always balk at one thing. How is it possible that such immense things as the stars should bother about *us*? The idea of the planet Mars being responsible for the fact that I cut myself on both cheeks with my razor seems to me utterly ridiculous and absurd."

Hoogerwoerd smiled.

"I wonder if it would seem absurd and ridiculous to you if you got sunstroke or prickly heat? Isn't that bound up with the influence of a star? And moon madness, what about that? Every one admits that that is the result of a star's influence, nobody dares to doubt it. But you must not imagine that the influence of the stars is anything personal. *Waves*, my dear chap, waves of an unknown and little explored type. The planet Mars does not

bother about your cheeks at all. It simply sends out its waves because it is its nature to do so. This radiation has a hostile effect on you according to the angle at which it strikes the place where the sun or, in this particular instance, the ascendant was at the moment of your birth. That's all—and though it may seem strange to you it is a fact."

"That links our lives pretty closely with the universe—that sort of thing. Rather a lot to realize."

"A very natural thing to realize, I should say. The more progress science makes the more natural laws become visible to us. We ought to know by now that it is better to assume the existence of laws than to deny it."

"Is there any clear proof of the existence of star-waves?"

Hoogerwoerd's face was very serious as he answered: "Only one, but the clearest of all—experience. The ancient Chaldeans collected the first experiences; the Babylonians, Persians, and Egyptians worked on, and so, later, did the monks, to whom we owe much more than people realize. Then came the so-called 'period of enlightenment,' when people tried to prove everything by their poor little reasoning power only. It was the most stupid period of all, and there are still many people living in it. Valuable material has been lost, and astrology has shrivelled up into something abandoned and neglected by everybody. It was unfashionable to be interested in it. We have to build it up all over again."

I stood up.

"Well, you can count me in as trying to help do that. I want to study it. I suppose anyone can?"

"Certainly, just as anyone can study medicine. The only question is whether he will become a leading light and a blessing to humanity or just an ordinary little practitioner. I know your horoscope—you will be an astrologer all right."

"How long," I asked, "does it take to become an astrologer?"

Hoogerwoerd sighed.

"To learn the principles, rudiments, and chief rules—six months. To master the science—all your life."

"Very well," I said. "Let's start now."

That discussion was in November 1930. To-day I look back over nearly seven years of astrological experience, and I am still learning every day.

The study of this science was a permanent succession of revelations. I learned to see into the minds and hearts of people, to understand why they thought and acted as they did. I began to understand their sympathies and antipathies. I know now the meaning of love and hate. I know why marriages between people are happy or unhappy.

After a time, a year perhaps, I found myself being thrust into the position of adviser to my friends, and it was a very solemn moment in this new life of mine when a friend whom I had advised not to fly to Munich on a certain date showed me the next day's paper, which contained news of the crash of that very aeroplane. All occupants dead. . . .

Sometimes, however, one may find oneself in a difficult, even desperate, situation. I went with Putti to a tea-party at the house of an old friend of ours, and met there a Mr Leborius, very good-looking, very well dressed, and engaged to a beautiful and charming girl. I knew his name well, and that he was the owner of a large film company, with a finger in all sorts of big business.

Somebody started talking about astrology, and Leborius said, grinning cheerfully, "All right. Go ahead with my horoscope, Mr Fortune-teller—only the nice things, of course!"

"I don't really believe he could tell you anything bad,"

said our hostess, smiling. "You are always so lucky, aren't you, Leborius? Quite apart from being engaged to such a charming girl, whatever you start always succeeds at once. How many thousands have you made since last week?"

Leborius laughed.

"She's right. I am extraordinarily lucky, and I've some big plans in my mind for the near future too."

Then he told me the date of his birth, and it sent a thrill through my whole body. It was the worst date he could possibly have named—he had appalling present aspects.

I grew so silent that he resented it. At last I asked him, "Haven't you felt depressed and nervous in the last few weeks? Was there no failure at all? No lawsuit?"

"Absolutely not—I'm glad to say," he answered, rather taken aback. "I'm quite all right, and everything is going splendidly. I'm afraid your science is not quite as accurate as you seem to think. Or maybe you've made a mistake in your calculations."

"I don't think so," I said.

I was feeling absolutely sick, for I saw with horrifying clearness that this man was doomed without knowing it. He had not yet felt anything of the changes around him: it was clear enough, therefore, that it would strike him like a bolt from the blue. He did not see the heavy clouds gathered above his head.

Though I knew that it was too late I tried to warn him.

"Don't trust your luck, Mr Leborius. It does *not* look good—definitely not. If you value my advice in the least don't start anything new now. And I sincerely hope that you have not started anything in the last six weeks. Avoid lawsuits, avoid the possibility of getting into difficulties with officials of any kind—Income Tax people, law-courts, police, or whatever it is—however much you may think

that you are in the right. You can't win at the moment. I'm sorry I can't tell you something more favourable, but I honestly think it is my duty to warn you."

He was, of course, not very agreeably surprised, and nor was his pretty *fiancée*. I changed the subject as quickly as possible: we discussed films and books, and I did my best to bring back a cheerful atmosphere. As we were leaving Leborius asked me to send him a book of mine which he was interested in turning into a film, having read parts of it as a serial in a newspaper.

In the car Putti said, "This man may be rather important to you. I think he will buy your book all right. What a pity you told him such nasty things about himself."

"I had to," I said. "And he won't buy the book. He won't be buying anything. He's a lost man."

Three days later news of his arrest was in all the newspapers. He was charged with having taken German money secretly to foreign countries—a perfectly normal financial transaction in England, but a serious crime in Germany. His trial took place some months later, and he was condemned to thirteen years' hard labour, for not having been astrologically advised in time.

It had not been necessary for me to cast a complete horoscope for Leborius to see his aspects on that date, for on his telling me the day of his birth I knew the position of the sun at the moment of his birth, and I knew, of course, the appropriate present position of the main planets—especially that of Jupiter, the most powerful of all. A man under the exact aspect Jupiter square sun is in danger. If he does not feel it he is in triple danger. The degree, of course, depends on many things—on the sign of the Zodiac Jupiter is crossing, on the presence or absence of other, perhaps protecting aspects, and on the strength or weakness of Jupiter in the radix horoscope of the native.

ASTROLOGY CHANGES MY LIFE

All this I could not tell by knowing only date of his birth, but then I have had that appalling sensation of sudden and terrific clairvoyance many times in my life and long before I ever came across astrology. One can call it psychic, telepathic, or just uncanny, but I know to which aspect I owe it. It is not at all a pleasant gift to have, and yet I would not wish to lose it.

II

A type especially inclined to treat astrology as unstable and vague rubbish without any practical value is the so-called serious business-man. He is always quite flabbergasted when I mention drily that I increased my income by at least forty per cent. through astrology, because by its use I know when I am lucky and therefore force the hand, and because I deliberately avoid bad business aspects by travelling. I just go abroad and have a good time and forget all about business, a course which, I admit, is not possible for every one to take.

The last time I sinned against my horoscope was in 1932, in October. A big film company telephoned to me that they were anxious to buy the film rights of a book of mine. I looked at my calendar: Mercury square sun—a very bad aspect for business. But these people were offering me a sound price, and it seemed to me foolish to refuse. Mercury in my radix horoscope is always particularly lenient, and I persuaded myself that there was a hope that the unfavourable aspect would not work.

I accepted the offer, and duly received the contract: half the money was due in a fortnight, the balance in four weeks. Two days later I started off for Paris, Marseilles, and Algiers. Everything went smoothly, including a motor-trip to Bou Saada and Constantine, but there I

got a telegram: the money had not been paid, and a short time afterwards the company was declared bankrupt. Six weeks later, back in Berlin, I had the pleasure of buying back the rights of my novel from the liquidator (I had not received a penny from the company) at a loss of some hundred pounds or so, instead of being some thousands to the good.

Since that time I have always had the greatest respect for Mercury squares and treat them as a vegetarian an underdone steak.

Great as the financial advantages in positive and negative sense can be for the adept in astrology, the main advantages lie in deeper ground. There can never again be the feeling of "I shall never get out of this mess again," for one knows exactly *when* one will get out of the mess. There can be no more feelings of loneliness, for one is always conscious of one's close harmony with the universe, and yet never before does one feel so free and independent.

I am a happy man, thanks to my teacher Hoogerwoerd, thanks to the lucky aspects which made us meet, and thanks to the Creator of all aspects, laws, and planets.

It is a good thing to follow one's stars.

STRANGE HAPPENINGS

Graphology and astrology—Hanussen, the clairvoyant—His murder—A girl fakir—The Sidi Aissaoua sect in Algeria—I witness a strange *séance*—Cataleptic trances—I disguise myself as an Arab and live with Mahmud in Cairo—The Madama who went to see *zar*—A terrifying ceremony.

IT is amazing how little the average man knows about the not officially acknowledged sciences. And the little he does know he throws all in to one pot and stirs it with a spoon: then he looks at the extraordinary hotch-potch he has made and decides with very understandable scepticism not to eat of it. His mental digestion thus remains unstirred; his ignorance too.

It is almost impossible to talk to a layman about astrology without instantly being told, "Oh, yes, I once saw a chiromant"—or phrenologist, graphologist, card reader, or simply gipsy—"some time ago, and she told me the most astounding things. They came true, too. Of course the whole thing is utter nonsense, but I must say it was very odd, you know."

That sort of comment makes me extraordinarily angry. I do not know how much there is in card reading, phrenology, graphology, or chiromancy because I have not studied these things; my experience with astrology has taught me to be very cautious in judging things I do not thoroughly know. But if it is possible, without being a Sherlock Holmes, to draw definite conclusions about a man's character from a study of the room in which he lives, then it seems to me equally possible to see quite a lot about him in those instruments of daily, hourly use—his hands.

I think that there must be more than a little in graphology too, and for the same reasons, although there might well be cases in which even masters of that science might be mistaken.

I once had as my guest a well-known graphologist who boasted so loudly of his hobby in comparison with my astrology that I grew rather annoyed. I asked him if he could read any handwriting that was shown him, and his answer was an emphatic affirmative. So I brought him two different samples. He studied them for quite a while, and then said of the first that it was the handwriting of a very energetic man with big ideas and plans, and with a clearly defined inclination towards brutality. "He is a man who is absolutely sure of himself, and is merciless wherever his personal advantage demands it. A very clever and gifted man, by the way."

His judgment of the second sample was: "This is the handwriting of a very sensitive, frail little woman. She is no longer a girl, and is, I think, strongly under the influence of some one else, probably a man. She has a slight inclination towards certain feminine diseases, good taste, a great artistic sense. She is a woman who dresses beautifully, but would never be able to earn the money for her clothes."

I thanked him, took back the two samples, picked up a pen, and joined the samples by adding one more phrase. Then I handed them back to the graphologist.

He opened his mouth like a carp, and could not get it shut again. It was I who had written both samples.

This may seem rather a mean thing to do—a rude one, at any rate—but he had spoken with considerable contempt about astrology, and that sent me up in arms.

In every way my study of astrology has made me very cautious, not only about denying, but also about blindly

believing in things: everything has to be proved by a long chain of experiments before I register it as a fact.

What I have seen of so-called occult *séances* is, to me, lamentably unimpressive. It moves me not a whit to hear the spirit of Cæsar, Napoleon, or Frederick the Great talking trivial nonsense through the mouth of some fat *petite bourgeoisie*, and I cannot see why materialized hay or straw should be taken for anything other than common hay or straw—*i.e.*, fodder for cattle.

I happen to know a very charming young Englishwoman who has longed for many years to enter into communication with the spirit of a sister of hers who died in a rather tragic way. She has attended hundreds of *séances* in all parts of the world, but the result was always the same—the ‘spirit of Miss G.’ presenting itself to gabble nonsense through the mouth of an hysterical medium. That is the sort of thing that people pay for in hundreds of good guineas and in so much of that most valuable thing we have—time. I hold no brief for professional mediums. Occult matters belong—in contradistinction to scientific astrology—to the kingdom of mysticism, and the very first law of mysticism says as clear as crystal: “Whoever has the gift must not use it directly or indirectly to his own materialistic advantage. If he does so he will lose the gift.”

Dr Sarmananda, the Yogi in Bombay who told me the day of my birth and the day of my death, did not take so much as an anna for it. His antithesis was a man whose name used to be known in all Continental countries—Eric Jan Hanussen. He came, as far as I remember, from a little place in Czechoslovakia, and, there is no doubt about it, he possessed the gift in a very marked degree.

They made a star out of him; he appeared on the stage; he gave ‘experimental evenings,’ and had amazing

success. His 'consultation hours' were fought for day in, day out by hundreds of people; his advice was asked in all possible and impossible situations; and it became the fashion to give parties 'to meet Mr Hanussen' (his real name was nearly unpronounceable).

The little man from Czechoslovakia became the counsellor of rich women from among the oldest families; big business men and millionaires followed his advice in their most important deals. He was, of course, considerably flattered; his conceit rocketed to the sky. He made enormous sums in every currency of the world; he had newspapers printed filled with his prophecies; he lived in the luxury of a nawab, every ten minutes' audience bringing him four guineas. In twenty sessions, one after the other, he advised one visitor to emigrate to South America, another to get divorced, while to a third he told the identity of the thief who had stolen her diamond brooch.

It will readily be understood, without any knowledge of the laws of mysticism, that it was impossible so to abuse even the strongest gift of clairvoyance without the medium becoming exhausted. He grew weaker and weaker, and tried to hide it by more and more propaganda. His powers of suggestion were still strong enough to prevent, in a gathering of a thousand people, at least a hundred and fifty or more from unclasping the hands they had folded at his command—until he permitted them.

He set himself up in a fantastically luxurious flat in the fashionable quarter of Berlin, and received great crowds of interesting guests, among them a number of high National-socialist officials.

Then came his sudden end. He was appearing then each evening on the Scala stage. One night there was a great commotion: the management was forced to change their programme at a moment's notice, for Hanussen,

their star, had disappeared. Shortly afterwards his body was found in a forest near Berlin. He had been murdered.

Had he at that time been still in full possession of his clairvoyant gift he would have been able to leave in time a country where such a fate was waiting for him.

In Vienna I met a young female fakir—a very pretty Eurasian, a delicate little creature of perhaps twenty, with fine regular features, and masses of wild black hair. Her father was French, her mother an Indian from Bikanir. She had been brought up by circus artists, had given performances in South America, and had just arrived in Europe on her first visit.

Her powers were extraordinary: she hypnotized chickens and crocodiles; she put herself into a cataleptic state and thrust daggers and needles through her arms and her throat without any flow of blood; she climbed a staircase whose stairs were sharp swords; she had a heavy stone put on her frail chest and smashed to pieces by the iron hammers of four stage workmen. Finally she was buried in her cataleptic state in a coffin which was then covered with earth, and there she stayed long enough to have died of suffocation ten times over.

The show seemed to have been a bit too terrifying for the sensitive Vienna audiences, for there were people at every performance who had to be carried out in a fainting condition.

I got to know her quite well—we were staying at the same hotel—and we talked of many things. She was a child without any knowledge of anything not connected with her work. She had the gift, without ever wondering where it came from. She was happy in her work, but I felt shadows over her—and yet what use would it have been to warn her?

And then some months ago I read that she had been

bitten by one of her crocodiles—I think it was in Copenhagen—and had had to be taken to hospital. Is the gift already fading away?

Things similar to those she did—only wilder and even more impressive—I saw done by members of a strange religious sect in Algeria—the Sidi Aissaoua. The name comes from the founder of the sect, Sidi Aissa (the Arabic form of the name Jesus), a well-known North African saint. They are fanatical Mohammedans, and have disciples from Morocco to Egypt. One monastery is in Cairouan, Tunisia, another one in Constantine.

I reached Constantine *via* Algiers, Bou Saada, and Biskra, and there presented an introduction I had been given to an Arab doctor, who received me very kindly. It was in his house that I first heard of the Sidi Aissaoua. It was a Wednesday, and Thursday was the day on which the *séances* of the sect used to take place. It was not easy, however, to get to see them, for the *séances* were actually forbidden officially, the French Government having tried to put a stop to them.

I tried hard, however, and eventually succeeded in getting a permit from the Government to meet the Mokaddam, the local head of the sect, a frail little man with rather uncanny black eyes behind strangely shaped spectacles. We discussed all sorts of religious topics, and it amused him very much to hear me quote the first and especially the hundred and ninth *sura* of the Koran in German.

The hundred and ninth *sura*—the Koran has altogether 114 *suras*, or chapters—is called “El Imtihan,” the examination, and goes like this:

In the name of the all merciful God, say: Oh, ye unbelievers, I am not adoring what you are adoring, and you are not adoring what I am adoring. And I shall never be

adoring what you are adoring, and you will never be adoring what I am adoring. You have your religion, and I have mine.

This is not a particularly easy thing to repeat in English or in German, especially if one says it fast. In Arabic it is triply hard. The Arabic word for 'adore'—*itaram*—is so difficult in its conjugation that even an Arab can easily sprain his tongue at it.

As everybody knows, Mohammedans are not allowed to touch alcohol. "*Kull muskuru shejatin*," the Prophet hath said. "All that maketh drunk is of the devil." A man suspected of drunkenness is sometimes set to repeat the *sura* "El Imtihan" as fast as he can. If he is under the influence of drink he is bound to fail, for it is hard enough when sober.

There are, of course, many Mohammedans who disobey that law, but none ever do so without making at least some pretence at saving their face. The bolder ones assert, for instance, that whisky and brandy cannot be forbidden because they did not exist at the time of the Prophet. A pleasant young Indian whom I met on my way to India had his own solution of the problem: he used to order tonic water only, but before we reached Port Said I found out that there was a silent agreement between him and the barman that every tonic water thus ordered should be given the sound and invisible basis of a double gin.

When the Mokaddam saw that I knew for what purpose the *sura* "El Imtihan" was used he smiled and told me the story of a man who came to see him and said, "Mokaddam, you are a holy man, and as such you are bound to be just. Wonderful blue grapes are growing in my garden; it cannot be sinful to eat them, can it?"

"No, my son."

"Right, O Mokaddam. Now I have pressed their juice

and distilled it without putting any sort of poison in it, and without invoking djins or afrits or other evil spirits, leave alone the Horned One. What is more, I have prayed ceaselessly the holy 'Fatihah,' the first *sura* of the Book of Books. Surely it cannot be sinful to drink the juice of those grapes like it is now? Or do you think it can do me any harm?"

The Mokaddam looked at him sternly. Then he took a handful of sand and said, "My son, if I throw this sand on your head will that harm you?"

"It will not, O Mokaddam."

"Now I take this same sand and mix it up with common water and I bake a brick from it, invoking Allah and the Prophet and the holy Caliphs, and then I throw it at your head—it won't do you any harm now either, will it?"

The man bowed three times very deeply, withdrew, and remained a teetotaller.

The Mokaddam saw that I was really interested in studying the religious customs of his sect. Religious propaganda is the sole purpose of the *séances* of the Sidi Aissaoua of Constantine. They take no money for them, though I have been told that it is not quite the same with the branch in Kairouan. He agreed to let me watch the *séance* on the Thursday.

"Yours are good nerves, I trust?" he asked.

"I think so," I replied confidently.

On Thursday evening I entered the monastery. I was not the only spectator, for my friend the doctor was there, and he had brought with him a young French artillery officer who had only recently been transferred to Algeria. He was in uniform, a smart-looking boy, tall, strong, and well-bred.

"I've brought him along because he has rather annoyed me," whispered the doctor with a smile. "He simply did

not believe what I told him of the Sidi Aissaoua. Takes it for humbug."

The young officer laughed.

"Seems that people become superstitious when they have lived out here for a certain time," he said. "It's the climate, I suppose. Well, it hasn't affected me yet, and I don't fall for jugglers' tricks. Can do 'em myself, you see."

"You forget that the Sidi Aissaoua don't take any money," I whispered back. "So what's their interest in deluding us by a faked show? It's religious propaganda."

"There is no such thing as religious propaganda without tricks," said the officer shrugging.

Then we stopped talking, for the *séance* was beginning. Monks marched into the hall, in a corner of which we were sitting on cushions. They were all in white, and a band of four men played a monotonous melody with a kettledrum to mark the rhythm.

Two monks set a brass kettle on a tripod and lit a coal fire underneath. I thought of Pythias and the Oracle of Delphi, but this had nothing to do with prophecies. Whitish-yellow fumes came out of the kettle, and a rather strong smell, sharp and aromatic.

"What's in there?" I asked in a low voice.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know. I think the Mokaddam and a few of the oldest brothers are the only ones who do."

The Mokaddam stood in the middle of the room and clapped his hands together. The monks formed a circle and started a sort of rhythmic movement. Quicker and quicker became the playing of the musicians; quicker and quicker the movements of the monks. At last one of them left the circle, approached the kettle, and, bending down, inhaled the fumes. He was staggering when he walked back. His face was wet with perspiration.

He began to dance. One after another approached the kettle then: and the quiet, dignified white-clad figures became dancing demons.

Servants appeared with daggers and swords, and the dancers took them. Suddenly one of them thrust a dagger into his arm, so strongly that the point slipped out on the other side, but no blood flowed. He was singing now, some sort of litany.

Quicker and quicker danced the fanatics, from time to time bending again over the poisonous fumes of the kettle. An emaciated young monk pushed a dagger through both of his cheeks, his eyes gleaming like those of a madman. Another already had three daggers in his body.

It was not very pleasant to watch, and I glanced furtively at the artillery officer. He was a little pale, but he laughed mockingly.

"Well done indeed," he said. "But I know *how* they do it."

A big fellow thrust a long sword through his shoulder.

"That's no trick," I said.

"Of course it is," maintained the young officer. "The whole damned thing is childishly simple. They have property daggers and swords. The things couldn't hurt a child. I know. Wait—I'll show them!"

Before we could prevent him he drew his own sword.

"Why don't you try it with this one?" he asked loudly.

The dancers did not take any notice of him, but one of the servants came and took the sword. It was a heavy service sword, very sharp, and with a broad blade. The servant pressed it into the hand of one of the dancers, the big one who had already one sword in his shoulder. He went on dancing, his eyes flaming, his chin up in the air, a grotesque and terrible figure. Slowly he came nearer and nearer, without looking at us. At a distance

of not more than a yard from the young officer he suddenly stopped and tore his long white *djelaba* off, so that his dark hairy brown chest and his stomach were bared. A hoarse cry, a swift movement—and he had thrust the heavy sword right through his stomach.

The young officer jumped to his feet and stared at the man with wide eyes. Then he turned and rushed out of the room as if pursued. The doctor hurried after him quickly, and so did I, for I was only too glad to escape from that infernal room. We caught the boy near the entrance of the monastery, crying and desperate.

"I've killed him!" he shouted again and again. "I've killed him!"

He did not believe that the man could live, and the doctor's attempts at reassurances were in vain.

"I must leave at once!" he cried. "I must go back to France. They'll have me in court for this. I'm done for——"

He was half crazy, but at last the doctor managed to get him to return with him to the monastery to make sure that the man not only was alive, but that nothing had happened to him at all.

"Are you coming with us?" he asked me.

"No, thanks," I said. I was feeling rather sick. "I'll wait here."

After about five minutes three men came out of the entrance: they were carrying a fourth. The three men were the doctor and two servants, and they were carrying the soldier, now in a dead faint. We got him to a hotel, where he quite soon regained consciousness. Then we sent him home in a taxi.

"What actually happened to him?" I asked the doctor on our way home.

He laughed.

"I wanted to show him that the man was unharmed. As

a matter of fact, he was still dancing when we went up to him. He looked at us, and then very slowly pulled the long sword out of his stomach. That was too much for the poor gunner boy, and he fainted dead away. I put his sword back into its scabbard—the blade was still quite warm—and we carried him out. He's got bad nerves, *ce pauvre garçon*."

I said nothing, but I think I was rather glad that I had not been there.

"Any explanation for all that?" I asked at last.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"Cataleptic state," he said. "The old business. How those fellows get themselves into it I don't know, though. One ought to find out what sort of herbs they use to produce those fumes."

But my girl fakir got herself into just the same state without using fumes and herbs. She just concentrated, took a deep breath and—was cataleptic, rigid, insensible. I do not understand it, and up till now I have not yet met anyone who does, for the very simple reason that no one knows exactly what catalepsy is, just as no one knows exactly what electricity is, although there are so many opportunities of studying it in all its manifestations and forms.

II

The strangest *séance* I have ever seen in my life I witnessed in Cairo. It was my third visit there, and I spent it in roaming day after day among its surroundings, always with the same guide, old Mahmud. Mahmud is not his real name, but, as the persons connected with this incident are still alive, he included, I prefer to call him Mahmud. He had grown rather fond of me, and one day asked me, after a long ride by Saccara into the desert, if I would "honour his humble house with my presence."

I accepted at once, but made a counter proposition: I wanted to stay at his home for three days living like a city Arab, dressed as an Arab, and actually being an Arab for everybody except him.

Old Mahmud very nearly choked with laughter.

"Everybody will know that you are not an Arab, Effendi."

"Wait and see, Mahmud."

"Your skin——"

"I shall change colour, of course."

"Oh, oh, Effendi—and you don't speak Arabic well enough——"

"I won't speak at all. I am a deaf mute, unfortunately, and we make ourselves understood by using signs."

Tears of laughter were running down old Mahmud's wrinkled cheeks.

"He is a deaf mute, the Effendi—and he will dye his skin, *wallahi!* *Allah akbar*, Allah is great, and the ideas of the Effendis are sometimes like the ideas of a child——"

But the Effendi had also the obstinacy of a child, and so it came to pass that a few days later an Arab entered the house of my friend Mahmud—a tall, strongly built fellow, dark brown, with a short black beard. He was wearing a *haik*, like one does in Algeria, and a *keffije*, a headcloth with gold strings. All these things I had bought some time earlier at Hadj Lakdar Boughoughal's shop in Biskra, near the Hotel Royal, and they suited my purpose admirably, for I wanted to be taken for an Algerian Arab, not for an Egyptian one. The latter would have been too dangerous, though I had eliminated the main danger by posing as a deaf mute. The dyeing of my skin was perfect: it had been done with a decoction of walnuts in the back room of a chemist's shop. It was the month of Ramadan, and there are a lot of fancy-dress balls in Cairo at that time, so the kindly old chemist thought it great fun to

help me with my transfiguration. My European clothes I took with me in a bundle, having left my hotel with an empty trunk after telling them that I was going up to Fayum for a couple of days. The rest of my luggage I left at the hotel, and the empty trunk at the chemist's: it was all worked out to the smallest detail.

At dusk I arrived at Mahmud's place, for I did not yet dare to cross the streets in broad daylight. Mahmud received me with an enthusiastic cascade of words as his old friend from the Maghrib (West), and did his very best to suppress his amazement and his inclination to laugh. My name was Omar ben Mobarek, and I was a merchant; I had come to see what business could be done in Egypt, and my friend Mahmud had offered me hospitality—that was all.

First of all he locked up the bundle of my European clothes, and then we sat down to dinner—he, his three sons, a nephew of his, and I. It was their first meal of the day, for during the Ramadan, the month of fasting, the Moslem is not allowed to eat more than once a day, and that after sunset. They were very hungry, and fell ravenously on the food, which, by the way, was very excellent: *kebab* (mutton roast on a spit), *couscous* (millet gruel), *kunafeh* (noodles with sugar), dates, figs, and coffee. The meat and millet gruel had to be eaten with the fingers out of one big bowl, around which we crouched like big white birds. From then on began to happen that for which I had so hoped: the spell, the great spell began to work.

Up till then the whole business had been a joke, more or less—an affair of fancy dress, just fun at which the chemist and I had laughed riotously; and on my way to Mahmud I had been rather nervous and afraid of being recognized as a masquerading European.

Only as I sat and shared the meal with these Moham-

medans did I begin to feel I was now another person. Often and often I had seen Arabs sitting round their food, had thought of their lives; I was brimful of old customs and habits.

I used to project myself into it: I was a young fellow, a boy, going to school and learning the words of the Koran and the history of Islam. Later on I was going to the *mederssa*, the university, to El Azhar of course, the Mohammedan Oxford; I took a wife then, a girl whom I had never seen before she was wedded to me. My mother, knowing my taste, had chosen her for me, and never had a man, her father excepted, seen her unveiled. I procreated children, sons first of all, for girls are nothing and do not count, and my sons grew up. I attended to my business, and my beard became grey, at last quite white. I became insensible to the charms of my wives—I had taken a second one a couple of years after the first, for Allah had prospered my business and I could afford it. But now women did not mean anything to me any more. I spent my time in the coffee houses, playing games with my old friends, drinking peppermint-tea and smoking a *nargileh*, a hubble-bubble—the pipe belonged to the *cavedji*, but I brought my own mouth-piece of ivory and screwed it on the pipe. Then one day I fell ill, and the *hakim* doctor came, and shrugged his shoulders, and I knew that my days were numbered, and that I would soon have to stand before the stern face of the One and Only God. So I set my house in order, left everything to my eldest son—including the care of my wives—and lay down and died. And the Archangel Gabriel guided me across the dreaded bridge Es Sireth, as thin and sharp as the blade of a razor, with Gehenna roaring below, and Allah weighed my deeds on El Mizhan, the balance of justice—he found every one written down in the Book of Life—and, behold, the good ones

weighted down the scales. I had said the five daily prayers regularly, I had visited the mosque on Fridays, and once I had even made the *hadj*, the pilgrim's journey to Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina. I had not cheated my business partners more than was absolutely necessary, and I had abstained from alcohol, so I was found worthy to enter the third paradise, not worthy of the highest, the seventh, but at any rate of the third; and I was thirty yards high, and eternally thirty years old. Milk and honey and coffee flowed in the rivers of paradise, and beautiful houris prepared my meals and bed, and behold! I found interest in women again. . . .

Often, very often, I had dreamed of my life as a Moslem, and now I wanted to live it in reality. The dream became life. My timidity was gone: I enjoyed the food, and I showed my enjoyment with the correct amount of noise required by Arabian good manners, and after dinner I belched energetically and onionously as a grateful demonstration of repletion.

The leavings of our meal were given to the women—Mahmud's wife and the wives of his two older sons were living in the house, which, by the way, belonged to the old guide. It was furnished in the usual Oriental way—carpets, cushions, oil-lamps, and a few cupboards—but it was a good big house. The old man had saved a fair amount of money in those thirty odd years he had spent in guiding tourists of all nations through Upper and Lower Egypt.

After dinner we smoked a pipe, and then retired to rest. Mahmud led me into my room, which was small, but very clean, the walls whitewashed, and I slept beautifully on a couch of old carpets on which a silken rug had been spread.

The following days were glorious ones, and the only thing I missed was my bath—I even had to be very careful

about washing, for I did not dare put too much of a strain on my beautiful nut-brown skin. But apart from that it was a wonderful life: quiet dreaming in Mahmud's little garden, my clay pipe in my mouth, and occasional strolls, mostly a little before sunset.

After a while my ears became used to the vernacular, and I began to understand what was being said around me. I had to be careful, though, that no one noticed this new understanding, for a deaf mute does not become normal between one day and the next. There were other things to remember too: not to put my hand in front of my mouth when coughing, which is only done by Europeans, who then promptly shake with that very hand the hand of some one else; whereas the Arab prefers to cough the germs directly into his friend's face. I have been told that Afridis on the North-west frontier of India once shot an Afghan trader who had committed the social *faux pas* of holding his hand before his mouth when coughing, and thus betraying the fact that he was a European in disguise, therefore an Englishman, and therefore a spy.

I was running no risk of that nature: I was not surrounded by rebellious tribes, for this was Cairo, and Cairo is not especially fanatical. It would have been another story in Kerbela, Nedjef Ali, or, most emphatically, Mecca or Medina. Yet I did not want to have my secret unveiled.

I do not know if Mahmud had told his family the truth about me; at any rate, they treated me with perfect politeness and that slight hint of pity and embarrassment a deaf mute always meets among normal people in any country in the world. People sometimes looked at me rather curiously in the streets and coffee houses, but that might very well be due to my Algerian dress, which is a rather uncommon one in Cairo. I missed my cigars very much,

but that could not be helped, and a clay pipe is not too bad when one gets used to it.

Three or four days passed in wonderful peace, broken only by adventures of the very mildest kind. Then one evening Mahmud came to me in the garden. His sons and his nephew were not at home, and the women never left their apartments, so we were able to talk without any danger of being interrupted or watched.

"Do you want to see a thing you have never seen before and you will never see again, Effendi?" asked the old man. He blinked, and his thin brown hands twitched. He seemed to be a little excited.

"Of course I do," I answered in a low voice. "What is it?"

"It is not without danger," said Mahmud hesitatingly. "I wanted to take Ali or Abdul with me, but Ali is in Fayum, and Abdul won't be back till late at night from Sakkara, because there is moonlight, and the Americani always like to stay awake very late then because the moon makes them mad."

The sons of dear old Mahmud were guides too.

"Well?" I said, as quietly as possible.

"There is a very rich Madama at the Semiramis," said Mahmud. "She's willing to spend quite a lot of money to see *zar*, and I found out where *zar* is made, and it is a very beautiful *zar* too, in the house of a very rich man. But I must have somebody with me, for if anything happens I can't carry the Madama away all by myself."

"What do you mean—if anything happens?" I asked.

The old man stared at me.

"O Allah, Effendi, don't you know how dangerous it is to be in a house where *zar* is done, and don't you know how easily a Madama faints when she sees something stronger than her nerves can bear?"

"I do indeed, Mahmud," I replied with dignity. "But don't call me Effendi—I am Sidi Omar ben Mobarak. You might easily make a slip when one of your sons is present, or your nephew."

"That's right, Sidi, but they would be even more surprised to hear you talking." Old Mahmud grinned cheerfully.

He was right, and I changed the subject quickly.

"So you want me to come with you as a sort of life-guard, do you? What is *zar*, by the way? I've never heard the word before in my life."

"Mash'Allah, Effendi—I mean Sidi—you don't know what *zar* is? But, as a matter of fact, Omar ben Mobarak—a real one, I mean—would not know it either, I think, for they don't know anything about it in the Maghrib, only here in Egypt. Listen to me, then, Sidi; I will explain. When an Egyptian woman is seriously worried about something—her husband may not be faithful to her any more, or her lover, if she is one of those bitches—when she thinks that some one dear to her is in danger—if her mother is ill, or one of her children—then she does not call for the dressmaker to make her new dresses to please her master or her lover and to catch his glance again; she does not call for the Hakim to have her mother or her child cured with the help of the All-merciful Allah. Very often, at least, she does not do so; but she calls for an old mother of witchcraft—mostly they are Sudanese women banished from their own country because nobody there would dare any more the evil glances of their bleared eyes."

Mahmud spat vigorously, and Omar ben Mobarak followed his example.

"That old grandmother of the Seven Times Stoned One comes at once," the old man went on, "and usually she declares that a djinn, an afrit, an evil spirit, is the cause

of the lady's worries. So *zar* must be made to conciliate the djinn. . . ."

"*Zar* is a sort of sacrifice then, Mahmud?"

"It is a sacrifice, Effendi, yes. Often it does not work, so it has to be repeated, and made bigger too. Many rich women have lost all their money making *zar*. . . ."

"A swindle, then," I said. "Ordinary sort of humbug, eh?"

Old Mahmud shrugged his shoulders.

"Who knows?" he murmured. "I have seen so many things in this big town El Kahira, Effendi, so many things. I don't know if it is all humbug, as you say. But you have the keen eye of the *taleb*, the wise one, Effendi; you know the Koran like a teacher of El Azhar, and you see into the very hearts of mankind and write down what you have found like the angel writing the Book of Books. You ought to see yourself and judge then. . . ."

The "Seven Times Stoned One" himself would have been melted by such well-chosen compliments.

"And there is the Madama from the Semiramis," Mahmud added rather hastily. "She is very beautiful, Effendi. A man who likes a quiet sleep under his roof would be better not to take her home—but she is very beautiful."

He was definitely no fool, old Mahmud.

I asked for further details and got them. The *séance* was to take place in the house of a very rich man at the other side of Kasr el Nil. It was a secret one, of course, but Mahmud happened to know the gardener there, and had been told by him that the mistress was going to make *zar* that very evening. There was a chance of watching the *séance* inside the house without being seen, and if he availed himself of it Mahmud had, of course, to split the Madama's money with the gardener.

The whole thing seemed to be rather risky, as the old man genuinely wanted to take me with him as a sort

of lifeguard, instead of making me pay, and moreover he described everything in as tempting terms as possible so as to make certain of my acceptance. The mysterious Madama seemed to have promised him a lot of money too.

Well, I had seen the Sidi Aissaoua at their games without fainting: I could not imagine that it would be so much worse than that. . . .

But it was to be worse—much worse—though in quite another way.

"What time does it start, Mahmud?"

"This evening, Effendi. We'll fetch the Madama at ten o'clock at the Semiramis—if you will come with me."

"All right, I'll come."

At ten we arrived at that glamorous riverside hotel and waited, two dusky and humble shadows at the shining entrance. I laughed to think how often I had had tea or dinner there, yet I ranked now with servants and dragomen, and if I dared to go in and sit down at a table they would have me thrown out at once.

The Madama was very punctual, and appeared almost immediately, a slim figure in a black evening dress with a light silk cloak round her shoulders.

"Good evening," she said coolly. "Who is this man, Mahmud?"

"A friend, Madama—a very good friend of mine. We could not do without him."

"You won't get a piastre more than I promised you."

"I know, Madama—and so does my friend."

"Let's go then."

She spoke English with a rather strong French or Belgian accent, and she was a *rousse* with a very white skin, grey eyes, and a very sensitive, nervous nose slightly on the long side. I saw the rings on her fingers, and her bracelets, and they made me open my eyes.

Behind her back old Mahmud pulled a face and winked

at me. He had not said a word too much. The Madama *was* a very beautiful, an incredibly beautiful woman; she was certainly rich, and she had not the sham sureness of the *demi-mondaine* who owes every piece of her jewellery to somebody else; she was a real lady. But it was terribly rash to roam the city alone with us two Arabs, with diamonds on her fingers and arms whose value would have satiated ten Egyptian dragomen for the rest of their lives.

We crossed the Nile bridge and passed the Ghezira. The moon was shining brightly, and I would have given a lot not to have been an Arab that night. "A man who likes a quiet sleep under his roof would be better not to take her home—but she is very beautiful," that keen observer old Mahmud had said. I looked at her again: her delicately shaped mouth was rather cruel, and her cool grey eyes with their long—probably artificially lengthened—lashes made her look somehow demoniac. She reminded me in a way of that beautiful unknown woman we had seen, Peter and I, in Smyrna—but she was harder, more resolute, more Occidental.

We came to a big, dark house standing in a beautiful garden. Mahmud whistled softly, and a man appeared—the gardener, of course, who asked for his money before even admitting us. The Madama paid at once, and I saw that he got twenty pounds, and Mahmud thirty.

We went through the garden to the rear of the house. Here the gardener opened a small door and went down a staircase, passed two or three empty rooms, and went up another staircase, a much higher one this time. At the end of it was a narrow sort of corridor. Here we stopped, and the gardener showed us a small window with wooden shutters. The shutters were adorned with scrolls, so that we were able to see through a number of holes without being seen ourselves. The typical harem-

window, I thought, and suddenly I realized that we were in the part of the house which belonged to the women's rooms.

We approached the window and looked through: into a big room, beautifully furnished in European style. Seven or eight young women were sitting there on chairs and couches, some of them in European, some in Oriental dress, but unveiled, of course. They were drinking champagne, and were chattering and laughing a lot. This did not look at all like a *séance* of any kind, and Mahmud, somewhat superfluously, whispered into the Madama's ear, "They have not started yet."

The gardener dug him in the ribs and whispered, "*Uskut!*" ("Be quiet!")

We waited in silence for perhaps a quarter of an hour. Then a servant came in and announced something which I could not catch to one of the women, whom I took to be the hostess, the woman we had come to watch making *zar*. She was in her early thirties—not very young, according to Oriental standards, but very *soignée* and still beautiful.

Mahmud whispered, "This is the wife of — Bey in whose house we are. She is making *zar* because her husband has become the friend of a singing woman from the opera."

When the servant had spoken the hostess nodded, and the maid left the room to return with four hideous old Sudanese women, carrying strangely shaped musical instruments and two smoking censers in their thin black claws.

They bowed before the hostess, put down the censers, squatted down in a corner of the room, and began the most appalling, gruesome, hair-raising concert I have ever heard. If by this means they hoped to exorcise a performer of Verdi's and Puccini's opera I felt their efforts

would be entirely wasted. It was even more ghastly when, after a while, they began to sing. They howled like a brigade of cats, rocking their haggard bodies to and fro.

I took a covert look at the Madama: she looked as cool and haughty as ever. "So that is what you gave fifty pounds for," I thought mockingly.

But suddenly the oldest of the four hags clapped her hands together, the music stopped, a curtain was lifted by invisible hands, and—the surprise took my breath away—a *camel* came into the room, a big, mouse-coloured camel, led by a fat, bull-necked man with a puffy face. The ladies blew kisses to him, and his crowing, high-pitched laugh betrayed that he was a eunuch.

He led the big animal into the middle of the room. The fumes from the censers mounted to my nostrils, a strange, sweetish sort of smell I have never met before or since.

Again the old Sudanese clapped her hands, and the music started again, louder and shriller even than before. The camel was nervous and tried to free itself, but the eunuch held it tightly. The singing of the Sudanese witches was a nightmare cacophony, unbearable, but all the women in the room had caught the rhythm and were rocking to and fro. . . .

The eunuch drew a broad-bladed knife and thrust it expertly into the camel's throat, so that a fountain of blood spurted up over him and over the women squatting near, who shrieked aloud.

The camel collapsed, pawed at the ground once or twice, and then fell dead on the floor.

At once those pretty, well-dressed women seemed to become demented, either from the sight of the blood, the intoxicating incense, the terrible music, or a combination of all these excitants. They yelled and shrieked,

they made strange, dislocated movements as though trying to dance and being quite unable to.

One beautiful girl in a Paris dress threw herself on her knees by the dead camel, plunged both her hands into the still streaming blood, and smeared them right across her carefully made-up face. Then she jumped to her feet and began to dance like a demon. Two others followed her example. A third one paced up and down with huge strides, reciting something in a voice as deep as a man's. A fourth went down on all fours, mewing like a love-sick cat.

It was awful and repulsive in its cruel and perverted eroticism.

The Madama was breathing heavily, her eyes gleaming like those of a beast of prey, and suddenly she squeezed my arm until I felt her pointed finger-nails.

The eunuch, quiet and untouched by all that uproar around him, led in another camel, and the horrid sacrifice was repeated again. This time a woman actually threw herself on to the still twitching body to drink its blood from the very wound in the throat, until another pulled her bodily off to take her place.

It was so repulsive that I felt actual nausea—the Sidi Aissaoua were civilized gentlemen in comparison with these Mænads.

The Madama was laughing softly and excitedly all the time, and I felt that she would have given her eyes to have been with that infernal gathering herself. Slowly but deliberately I freed my arm from her grip, but she did not seem to notice at all: her face was distorted with excitement, and almost ugly.

A third camel was led into the room, and after that two donkeys, who shared the same fate. I was revolted utterly, sick of it all, but that beautiful beast standing beside me was still enthralled, and all the time

that devil's orchestra went on playing, playing, playing. . . .

At last came reaction from the madness: one woman after another staggered and fell; servants came, helped them up, and laid them on the couches; they cleaned their blood-smeared faces and made them sip some brandy.

"That will be all," whispered Mahmud.

The Madama sighed very deeply—obviously it was very difficult for her to drag herself away—but we staggered downstairs, followed by the furious whispering of the gardener. "Quiet, please!" murmured Mahmud. "The danger is not over yet. Quiet, please. . . ."

At last we reached the street. How sweet was the first breath of fresh air! On our way back to the hotel nobody spoke a single word, and at the entrance of the Semiramis the Madama nodded curtly and disappeared.

Mahmud and I went home.

"They are still at it," he grinned. "As soon as the women have recovered they start again. At least thirty animals will be sacrificed to-night. I said that it was over because the Madama would not have left if she had known. We would have been there all night. She has had good value for her money, Effendi, believe me, she has had good value."

I only grunted.

"Did you see the one who was mewling like a cat, Effendi? They say that the magic songs of the witches transform people into what they were in a former life—one into a cat, another into a man, a tree, a flower. There is no god except Allah, but this is the business of the Horned One with the Seven Tails, *wallahi*, believe me, Effendi."

"I believe you," I said, and meant it too.

"May Allah protect us against the Seven Times Stoned

One," said Mahmud. "This evening will cost — Bey's wife many thousand piastres—many, many hundreds of pounds. There are not only the animals, there are the servants too, who must keep their mouths shut. If the Bey hears of it he'll put her away, and, by Allah, would not he be right?"

I slept very badly that night, and by morning I was longing desperately for a cold bath, for soap, an English breakfast, and a cigar at least eight inches long. So Sidi Omar ben Mobarak, the deaf-mute merchant from the Maghrib, left the house of Mahmud, followed by the blessings of the family, to return to his far-off Algerian home.

My friend the chemist was amazed when I reappeared. A fancy-dress ball of four days and four nights was more than he could understand, and he was rather reserved, even suspicious, while helping me to get rid of the brown stain, which was not at all easy. Perhaps he thought that I was a secret service man, or a criminal whom he had helped to escape the police.

An hour later I made my reappearance at my hotel, and the same day I found out who the Madama was: the wife of a French business man who had remained in Paris. He was a *gros bourgeois*, but she was descended from a very old and aristocratic family. I saw her two days later at the Mena House. It was lunch-time: she wore a very simple white dress, practically no jewellery at all, and very little make-up; her companion was a nice young Englishman, who was looking at her with ill-concealed admiration.

She was quiet, cool, and slightly bored.

CHAPTER VIII

FILMS AND DISGUISES

The Last Company—Joe May—Emil Jannings, Lilian Harvey, Conrad Veidt—I disguise myself as an old man—"We don't read your novels any more; we just print them!"—I hoax an editor—Miss Edith Alice Gordon's novel is accepted—Ten days disguised as a woman at a Berlin hotel—A motor accident—Astrology saves my life—Alfred Zeisler and *Gold*—Fritz Lang.

FILMS had now become 'talkies,' and that made them twice as interesting as before for me. Six of my books had already been made into silent films, but I had gone to every first-night performance with a rather gloomy premonition and had come away from almost every one boiling with rage. I remember how Michael Arlen laughed when I told him this one bright afternoon in Cannes; then he confessed that he had never even seen the film from his famous novel *The Green Hat*.

I myself had written scenarios for silent pictures, and enjoyed doing it, yet in a way I had always felt like Omar ben Mobarak, the deaf mute; but now, with the coming of sound, everything was changed. Of course, it is still first the picture and then the sound and dialogue—who denies that knows nothing about films—but the whole scope is infinitely richer.

The first talking picture I wrote was a revelation to me. It was *The Last Company*, made by Ufa, and starring Conrad Veidt—one of the first 'talkies' ever to be made in Germany. It brought me into contact with a small group of men who, though each had a strong personality of his own, worked together as a team in single-minded enthusiasm *ad maiorem operis gloriam*. There was Wilhelm

—now in London; Koster—now in Hollywood; and Curt Bernhardt—now in London—the young director and one of the most talented Germany has ever produced. Neither Bernhardt nor I lacked temperament, and we had some notable clashes: I remember a scenario conference ending with the author throwing the director right across the room into a radio set. Only the latter was broken, even the friendship between Bernhardt and myself surviving. As a matter of fact, the scene about which we were fighting became eventually one of the best in the film, though I do not mean to pretend that it could not have been arrived at except at the expense of a radio set.

Carl Mayer—now in London—also worked with us. He was perhaps the only real poet of the German film industry, a little, curly-haired man, quiet and meditative, and of an almost Biblical goodness. Then there was also Heinz Goldberg, our technical construction expert—at the moment in Soviet Russia.

I had little chance of actually working with Koster, for he left our executive early on in the film, and only returned to it during its last couple of weeks. I always regretted that, for in that man was more than a Marius, as Sulla said of Cæsar. To-day he is director; to-morrow it will be unnecessary to state that fact, for the world will know it.

We all worked under the supervision of that grand old friend of mine, Joe May—to-day in Hollywood—whose films I had already watched with such enthusiasm as a boy. He is one of the few *grands seigneurs* of the films and a king of directors. His build and features recall those of Napoleon, and his temperament would have satisfied a dozen Corsicans. He is a little volcano of a man, a fanatical worker, and full of ideas.

Two months of scenario work in that executive was the very best talking-picture school a man could want, and

I was very happy: I loved that film, and Conrad Veidt surpassed himself.

Friends of mine, Prince and Princess Bentheim, asked me if I could arrange for Empress Hermine, the wife of ex-Emperor William II, to see the film, and I had a box put at her disposal. Prince Bentheim introduced Joe and myself.

The ex-Emperor's wife was a very beautiful lady, grey-haired, and with delicately cut features. Strangely enough she does not photograph well, and no picture of her shows her as she really is. The film moved her so deeply that she had tears in her eyes when she talked to Joe and myself about it afterwards.

It was a very simple story, the story of thirteen men, the survivors of a company, who had taken quarters in a windmill. A narrow little path led past the mill, and this path had to be defended by the thirteen to cover the retreat of their comrades. In defending it they were killed, all of them, including their captain, and a little girl followed them to death, the miller's daughter, who could not leave 'her soldiers' alone. That was all—but one knew every one of the thirteen men as one knows a friend, which is why so many people were weeping as they left the theatre.

Since those days the technique of film-making has improved vastly: I have seen many pictures which have filled me with enthusiasm: I have written many and have liked them too; but I shall never forget *The Last Company*.

While I was working under Pommer I met Emil Jannings for the first time. He liked my first book, a boxing story called *The Big Fight*, and continually thought of playing the lead in it himself. He was, like so many Germans, very keen on boxing, but only theoretically, and he did not feel physically fit enough to play my hero.

He was good company, and I remember how, much later on, I once had lunch with him at a little restaurant in the Kurfürstendamm to discuss another story. Of course he was recognized at once, and heads kept turning in our direction. We ordered the four-course lunch, were served with the soup, and then had to wait for our fish. Jannings frowned. He frowned even more when he saw that two people at the next table to ours had got their fish already and yet we were still waiting for ours.

He called the waiter, and there was a kind of earthquake in his voice.

"Waiter, those people have got their fish. I have not got mine. Why have I not got my fish? Why?"

The wretched waiter went purple, racked his brains as to how to appease the famous actor. Then he had a brainwave.

"They've got the ordinary fish, Mr Jannings," he whispered. "For you, of course, we are preparing a special fish."

Jannings looked at him, at first threateningly, then sulkily, then more and more kindly. Finally he beamed, and said in a voice creamy with satisfied pride, "Thank you, my boy."

The waiter mopped his forehead, smiled in relief, and hurried out to fetch the "special fish," which, of course, was just the same as that being eaten by our neighbours.

I used to meet Lilian Harvey too: a charming, entirely unspoiled little person. She had, after living for so many years in Germany, adopted a beautiful Berlinesse dialect, though when she wanted to she could, of course, speak absolutely correct German. She always played charmingly fragrant and ethereal dancing girls, and was always beloved by Archdukes or Princes in her pictures. In these stories

every one was always good to her, everybody loved her, and the very worst that could happen was that the said Archduke was forced to renounce her because he was being ordered by his Emperor to marry the Princess of Ruricaledonia. But in the first film I ever wrote for Lilian I made her a little girl eloping from a tropical island to become a lady as she had seen some one do on the films. She too wanted her furs and jewels, and to be surrounded by a bevy of adoring males. She boarded a freighter as stowaway, lost her way in a dark passage, missed a step, and fell into a barrel of tar. That was one of the scenes I wrote for poor Lilian, and I remember that it had to be rehearsed again and again. I hope she has forgiven me by now.

Since then I have often and often tried to change the type of part usually played by a particular actor or actress for whom I might be writing, for I think that one of the worst things about the film industry is the way in which actors—as well as directors and writers—become automatically ‘typed’ after a first success. Once cast as a gold-digger, a girl is marked up again and again for the same type of part; a director who has made a hit with a gangster picture is not given a chance with other types of story, but has to go on churning out gangster pictures for the rest of his life. A good film ‘villain’ is never given a chance to play virtue rewarded; a successful ‘vamp’ never wins through to play a one-man woman, although that splendid actress Myrna Loy is a notable exception, and Robert Montgomery has finally revolted against his eternal play-boy rôles by appearing as the murderer in *Night Must Fall*.

Conrad Veidt always used to be cast for demoniac parts, generally the strong, silent, almost pathological type of villain; he was never allowed to be loved. When I first hazarded the opinion to a director that there was much

more than that in Veidt and that I should like to write a straight part for him he laughed at me. "Don't talk rot, my dear chap," he said. "The public wants to see their Veidt a devil, veins swelling in his forehead, and all that sort of thing. They won't stand for anything else."

And then I wrote *Hauptmann Burk* for Veidt, the story of an ordinary young officer with a fanatical sense of duty. Veidt read it and looked doubtful.

"It's a risk," he said. "It'll kill ten years of Conrad Veidt."

"I think it's time that that Conrad Veidt was killed," I said. "*Le roi est mort: vive le roi!*"

His appearance in that part was an overwhelming success, which brings me back to my quarrel with type-casting and my wish to see notable players starred in new rôles. I should love, for instance, to write a comedy for Garbo—I could swear she has a sense of humour. I should like to see Robert Taylor, for instance, in the rôle of a charming crook-adventurer. I should like—I should like. . . .

II

Film followed after film; novel after novel; translations, with the queer feeling they bring when seeing one's own thoughts in Norwegian words, in Czechoslovakian, Italian, Swedish, Danish, once even in Turkish.

And letters poured in from people of all classes: people who did not know how to decide this and that problem, how to act here or there, and were convinced that I could tell them what to do.

A proud moment in my life occurred when my publisher received a letter from the ex-Emperor William's wife at Doorn saying that the Kaiser had been very entertained by one of my books; he had been reading it aloud to his *entourage*, who were so thrilled that in order to prevent

their getting too far ahead with the story before he could continue it he had locked the book up when he retired for the night.

Then one day I was in the editor's office of a big Berlin newspaper which had just bought the serial rights of a book of mine. The office was in one of Berlin's biggest buildings, and the whole building belonged to the publishers, who owned half a dozen newspapers and weeklies.

"You know," said the editor good-humouredly, "we don't read your novels any more."

"What!"

"No, we don't. We just print them, that's all. We know our public will eat up any new one by you, just as they did all the others."

I gasped. To say that to a novelist is worse by far than to tell a woman she is being courted just for her money.

As soon as I had got my breath again I let him have it.

"I *know* that's not true—I know it! I know you even tear off the front page of manuscripts before you give them to your reading staff just so as to get an unprejudiced report."

"That's true," he admitted.

"There you are," I said triumphantly.

"But not in your case," he said, "because a manuscript of yours does not even go to the reading department."

I was furious.

"I'll prove it to you!" I cried. "I'll prove you buy my books because they are good, and not because my name's on them, blast it!"

The editor laughed, amused at my violence.

"How do you intend to prove that?" he asked with an indulgent smile. "Are you going to send us your next novel under a pseudonym and through an agent?"

"I don't know *what* I'm going to do," I snapped. "But I'll prove it to you, don't you worry."

And I rushed out with a face like thunder. At home I thought over the wildest plans. The editor's own idea of sending him the next novel under a pseudonym through an agent was, of course, the simplest. But one never knew with agents if they would keep their mouths shut. Also they are very expensive—much more so than in England—for they claim a commission of between 20 and 30 per cent. And then—and this was the main point—it was much *too* simple. I felt like Tom Sawyer when he was planning to get his friend, old Nigger Jim, out of gaol. He could have got him out in half an hour, for the gaol was, as far as I remember, a fowlhouse. But that would have been nothing; no adventure, no fun.

It had to be fun, that was the main point: why take so simple a way if there was a complicated way to do it? I thought of visiting the editor in the disguise of an old man with grey hair and a short white moustache. I could do that disguise—it was actually not very long before that I had travelled through Germany like that for three days. The principal character of the novel I was then writing was an old man like that, and I wanted to know what it felt like.

It was great fun—the first day. A girl gave me her seat in the subway; people were very nice and polite to me, and spoke to me in gentle voices. I went by train to Munich, stayed there for two days, and then returned. The last twenty-four hours had begun to bore me to death: my dignified stoop, my hoarse voice, my cautious and rather shaky movements, were getting on my nerves. The nearer I got to Berlin the less care I took: my fellow-travellers saw me getting younger and younger every moment, and I felt that they realized it.

Two gentlemen and a lady of about forty were in my

compartment, and when the old man in the corner pushed the window open with a rather youthful energy they looked at me in some astonishment. They did not actually suspect anything: their thoughts had not got as far as to realize that I must be disguised, but they were surprised, very much so.

I made up my mind to take the bull by the horns.

"Well, that *is* extraordinary," I muttered, just loud enough for them to hear. "Imagine it working after all—most extraordinary!"

Three pairs of eyes stared at me uncomprehendingly.

"I've come from Vienna, you know," I said, and felt my pulse.

Clumsily in three minds, two male and one female, grew the conviction that I was a bit weak in the head, and this thought called into being two rather uneasy male and one definitely frightened female glance.

"Quite normal!" I nodded in a satisfied way which yet left it open whether I referred to my pulse rate or to the state of my mind. "Oh, by the way—you don't know, of course. This is really very interesting, I think—I've come from Professor Steinach."

The three pairs of eyes widened.

"I thought why not go and give it a try," I went on, garrulous as old men often are. "One's read so much about it, hasn't one? And I'm seventy-one, you know, seventy-one. A nice age, they say. But it isn't quite as nice as that, you know."

I shook my head sadly.

"Gout," I complained. "Rheumatism. And one can't sleep, apart from all the other things. No, it isn't a nice age at all. So I went to see Professor Steinach."

Dead silence, while the three furtively examined the strange old man. At last the bolder of the two men dared to ask, "So he has—operated on you, has he?"

I nodded.

"Of course. Barely a week ago. I had to wait quite a time because they hadn't a suitable monkey gland. One can't very well put any old monkey gland into anyone who comes along. Whatever would happen to us, I ask you? It must be suitable—that's only logical."

The three nodded, half respectfully, half frightened: there was a tinge of disgust in their nods too.

"And does it work?" asked the older man.

"Amazingly," I replied cheerfully. "Last night I slept ever so much better, and already I feel decidedly stronger and—younger. I think I could do all sorts of things," I finished thoughtfully.

The lady cast a searching glance at me and shut her eyes. I saw with thankfulness that the train was just running past the first houses of Berlin.

"How very interesting," said the other man. "How—how was the operation, may I ask?"

"I have not the slightest idea," I answered very truthfully. "I did not feel a thing."

I took my suitcase down from the rack and slipped into my coat.

"Thank you—thank you—don't bother, I can do it. I can do it beautifully. Couldn't have done it a fortnight ago, though."

"Astounding," said the bolder one. "And you are seventy-one, aren't you?"

"I shall actually be seventy-two next year," I said. "But I feel—it may sound unbelievable—but I do feel like thirty!"

"Berlin!" cried a voice outside. The train stopped.

"*Auf Wiedersehen*," I said, and my voice was not hoarse at all.

I picked up my hat, my suitcase, and the heavy rubber-tipped stick and jumped out of the train. It must indeed

have been a suitable monkey gland, for I jumped again, and with both feet at once, grinned gaily up at the three now standing at the window with their mouths open, and, swinging my stick with youthful enthusiasm, paced towards the exit with my biggest strides.

In the taxi I only managed to stop laughing when I saw that the driver was looking at me in his mirror. Then I pulled myself together for a last effort and remained once more a dignified old gentleman without any monkey glands until I had reached home and could at last get rid of the grey wig, the white moustache, and the make-up. The latter was very complicated, especially as far as the hands were concerned: they were made up a yellowish brown and covered with a fixative to prevent discolouring, so that they genuinely looked like the hands of an old man.

I thought a lot about using that disguise for the benefit of my newspaper editor, but there was a good deal against it. Ordinary people may be more polite to an old man than to a young one, but he is not likely to be over-well received if he turns up at a newspaper office with a fat bundle of manuscript: the editor is too likely to feel that the old man has discovered his talent rather belatedly and is unlikely to accept a monkey gland as a trustworthy explanation.

I decided that to meet this case I needed a disguise which would be positive, not negative; and I called Putti into the library.

"Do you think one of your dresses would fit me?"

"Now that," said Putti, "is sheer impertinence. I haven't put on more than a pound in the last three months."

"I didn't mean that, darling. I really mean it!"

"Then you must be crazy," said Putti, with deep conviction.

"Damn!" I said. "Then I shall have to order one, and a

decent one too. A Paris model—or something that might pass for one.”

Putti’s eyes were like saucers until I told her the story of my visit to the editor, when she shouted with enthusiasm and wanted to go shopping at once.

“Half a minute,” I said. “You won’t get a ready-made one—that’s obvious. Besides, a smart girl like me can’t possibly wear ready-made stuff. Which means you’ll have to get the material and have it made up at your dressmaker’s. But what’ll you tell her? I can’t go and have fittings, you know. It’s going to be darned awkward.”

I did not realize that this was to be the easiest of the situations I was letting myself in for.

“You’ll have to be ill—poor dear,” said Putti instantly. “That’s why you can’t come to be fitted. I’ll take your measurements myself and give them to her. But you must have shoes too——”

“Blast—I hadn’t thought of that.”

“I’ll get them for you. And you’ll want lingerie, stockings, a hat, gloves, a bag——”

“Hey—stop. I’ve got to write the book first before I can take it along, and I haven’t the foggiest idea yet what sort it will be——”

“I’m going to order the dress to-day,” said Putti firmly. “You don’t know my dressmaker!”

There was no argument against that.

As a matter of fact, I got the idea for the book that very day: it was to be the story of a woman whose husband goes blind. He insists obstinately in carrying on with his business instead of retiring, and, of course, it begins to go steadily down the hill towards bankruptcy. His wife sees it, and sees how much her husband is suffering under his failure, so she uses his blindness to carry out a merciful deception on him. She tells him that a certain firm has lodged big orders with him; she writes at his

dictation the necessary letters to that firm and—secretly—their answering letters also. The blind man, who had been very near to suicide, regains hope through this success; he works feverishly over business which does not exist. Again and again this experiment has to be repeated, until the blind man is living in a very world of imagination, full of sham transactions, all of which are successful. But at last money runs short, and of course it is impossible for the wife to tell the blind man this; she tries to earn some. She tries the stage first, but she is no actress. There is only one way left to her. . . .

That was the original idea, and in three months the book was finished. In order to get inside the feelings of a blind man I went blind myself—for twenty-four hours—by firmly bandaging my eyes. It was a very strange experience. The first hour was awful: I did not dare to move about much, and yet I kept on knocking up against all sorts of things whose distances I continually misjudged. But three or four hours later the sense of touch began to develop itself. I felt that the door to the next room was within my reach; I felt who it was that came into the room; I began to recognize the servants' steps, and all my fingers started up a sort of private life of their own. They had much more feeling than before; they had become more intensive, one might say. I went on with the experiment for a day and a night because I did not want to miss getting up and dressing in the morning. It was rather a strain and, in a way, frightening, but it helped me a lot.

The novel was finished, and so also was the frock, and Putti helped me to dress up. It took us about two and a half hours, and at the end I found myself in a state of mental apology to all those women whose unpunctuality had more than once annoyed me. I have become so patient about that since that it has struck me that quite a number of married women might do worse than get their husbands

to dress completely as a woman from head to foot, just once: they might learn quite a lot.

At last it was over, and Putti stood back.

"Splendid! I'll bet you anything you like that nobody will ever guess you're a man."

I looked in the mirror, and for a second had the awful feeling that I did not exist any more, and that an entirely different person had taken my place. The entirely different person was a blonde, and an unusually tall woman with fairly regular features. She was made up rather heavily, and her figure was certainly not quite as streamlined as the fashion of to-day dictates. She was smart though, in a foreign-looking way: all in black, with a silver-fox collar; big pearl earrings; a rather conspicuous diamond bracelet glittering between gloves and cuff; eye veil; red-lacquered finger-nails. Everything was complete to the last detail, for the essence of a successful disguise is to put one's whole heart into it.

I stared in the glass: this being, this woman, was I. She raised her arm when I raised mine; she smiled when I smiled; and then she made a most unmaidenly face and said with the utmost conviction, "That is the most revolting six-foot hussy I have ever seen in my life."

"Don't be silly," said Putti, very proud of her work. "You're marvellous."

"I'm not quite the type of woman I usually like, you know," I said. "You ought to be the first to realize that."

Then I started to learn to walk all over again, complete with bag and umbrella, for I soon found that it was an art in itself to balance on heels nearly two inches high, and gracefully at that. It took some practice even to sit down and to get up, and much to talk in that soft, rather husky Iris Storm voice which had become the fashion since *The Green Hat*.

Putti and I rehearsed two or three times the scene I was to play with my editor.

"Don't smile too much," she criticized. "You are here on business, and if you make eyes like that he'll think you're just trying to vamp him and get scared stiff."

"Not more than I am now," I thought. I felt awful, and was very near crying off the whole thing; besides, I was already longing for a cigar. Already! If only I had known: but I did not.

The town hall clock struck twelve—it was the same town hall where I and my bicycle had joined the national rebels years before. It was time for me to go if I did not want to risk finding the editor had left for lunch.

I picked up my manuscript.

"Don't forget to give Billy his food," I said in a hollow voice. Billy was a Skye terrier with a black spot over the left eye. "Don't smoke too much. Peter is to have my Karl May books, but everything else is for you."

"Thank you, Miss Gordon," said Putti politely. Then she cried, "The visiting cards! You have forgotten the visiting cards!"

She stuffed them into my bag, half a dozen nicely printed visiting cards with the name of Edith Alice Gordon, London, which we had had specially done. The word 'London' was a certain sort of guarantee that the editor would see me personally, for, having given Edith Alice no appointment, he might, without some added stimulus, have left his secretary to deal with her.

"Be good," said Putti, trying not to laugh as she shut the front door behind me.

I went down in the lift and out into the street. Unlike Huckleberry Finn, I did not have to force myself not to forget that I was a girl. I was reminded of it at every turn: the high heels made me walk uncomfortably; the earrings

bobbed about, and the infernal corset cut me to about 30 per cent. of my usual breath allowance.

Bang! My bag dropped and scattered all its contents over the pavement: lip-stick, compact, vanishing cream, eyebrow pencil, keys, visiting cards, pocket mirror, and money. But it was my first triumph as a woman, for a man passing stopped, bent down, picked up everything, crammed it into the bag and handed it back to me with a little bow.

I murmured, "Thank you so much" with an Iris Storm voice, and smiled graciously—but not too much, as I did not want to frighten the poor fellow. Then I hailed a taxi and gave the man the address of the publishing house.

I was safe for at least a quarter of an hour, but I was feeling hot, desperately hot. I got out my little mirror, examined my face, and repowdered my nose, feeling it was quite a business to be a woman.

When the taxi stopped I was frightened to death and very nearly drove straight home again, but I pulled myself together, got out, paid the driver, and went into the building.

I knew those corridors so well, the faces even better. The pretty blonde secretary had announced me half a dozen times before, and used to smile and wink when I came in. To-day she looked cold and almost offhand. I tilted my beautifully powdered nose high into the air and asked to see the editor.

"Here is my card."

The secretary gave me a chilly look, nodded as an iceberg would if it could, and went into the holy of holies. I got the impression that she did not approve of heavily made-up ladies visiting her chief.

A minute later the editor received Miss Edith Alice Gordon of London.

He tried his very best Sixth-form English, but found to

his relief that the lady from London spoke perfect German.

"I have a German mother," I said, and smiled, but not too much, of course.

The editor was extremely polite, even when I handed him the manuscript.

"I'm leaving for Cannes to-night," I said. "At this time of the year we always long for a little sun in England, you know. But I shall be coming back through Berlin again in five weeks' time. You must let me know then what you think of my novel."

Then we talked of London and Berlin, and the many differences between the two places. After a quarter of an hour I rose to go. He took my hand.

"I know this is not the custom in your country," he said, smiling, "but we do it sometimes."

And he kissed my hand.

I smiled again, a tinier smile even than before, and tripped out, past the secretary, along the corridors, out of the building. I hailed a taxi. Twenty minutes later I was at home. It had worked. . . .

Five weeks later I repeated my visit. My face-powder was a shade or two darker this time—I had come straight from the Riviera. He was entirely charming again: the novel had been read—oh, yes, indeed—and though it was probably not a very diplomatic thing to say, the reports were excellent.

"Written with so much temperament and—er—energy and speed, Miss Gordon, and yet so delicate, so feminine in the best sense. Splendid work, indeed."

"In which of your papers are you going to print it then?"

He gave me the name of the paper and, after some hesitation, offered me a moderately good price. I smiled, this time without any reserve, and asked for double. Eventually we agreed to split the difference, which is how business discussions end nine times out of ten. The

contract had already been prepared, and the agreed figures simply had to be put in. That was done, and I went to see the cashier, and was paid my money at once.

Then Edith Alice went back to the editor's office.

"Forgotten something, Miss Gordon?" he asked kindly.

"Yes," I said, "I forgot to tell you that I have succeeded in proving to you what I wanted to prove—that you buy my books because they are damn' good and not because my name's on them."

He stared at me.

"Do you still not know me, old boy?" I asked, in my own voice.

His eyes went glassy. He stared and stared, at long last realizing the truth. When he had finished laughing he called his secretary in, and she hardly knew whether to laugh or cry. I was busy for the next ten minutes preventing him from telephoning to the editors of the other papers in the building to come in and have a look at me. Then he wanted to take me out to lunch as I was, but there I struck.

"If you only knew what it feels like to trip about in high heels *you'd* be damn' glad to get out of them the first second you could!"

"Edith Alice Gordon of London," he said. "And I've tried to talk to you in English—the difference between London and Berlin—you lying hussy——" He stopped short. "Listen," he said. "I've got an idea—a splendid idea. This is great—it's sensational! Know what we'll do? You write a series of articles for us—how a young English woman journalist comes to Berlin, and how she lives there, and what she does."

I thought that over.

"It's an idea all right—and a very good one too. I'll do it."

"You must live the whole thing, of course," he added

innocently. "I don't want fiction, you know—I want real reports, real adventures. You must go and take a room in a hotel as a woman, and live as a woman for at least a fortnight."

I jumped up.

"Live like—like this for a fortnight? In a hotel? You're crazy. It's impossible—quite out of the question."

"What a shame," he said. "Then we can't do it. Such a good idea, and we could have paid you a good price too. Twelve articles, I thought—five hundred marks each——"

"Not on your life. Be a woman for a fortnight? Not for anything in the world."

"I think we could go up to seven hundred," he said thoughtfully. That was, according to German standards, a record price, and I managed only a rather lame "No, no—quite impossible." I was wavering.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he tempted. "Split the difference and make it ten days instead of fourteen. And only a week in Berlin—a little car trip across Germany would make quite a good article too. Well?"

I sighed deeply.

"All right," I said.

He beamed, and at once started to dictate the contract which was to sentence me for ten days into women's clothes. I signed; he signed. I had to deliver the first article in three weeks' time.

"It's up to you to arrange the hotel business," he said. "I mean, question of identification and all that. We can't help you there."

I had not thought of that at all—and I was just going to say that that washed the whole thing out, for a foreigner in Germany must have a passport, and that passport must be shown to the hotel management; Edith Alice Gordon's only means of identification was a newly engraved visiting card. And then I saw his secret smile, and suddenly I

understood: this was his revenge, for I had signed the contract. . . .

"All right," I said as airily as possible. "I'll see to that."

"But no cheating, now," he warned. "Ten days—and a week in a Berlin hotel is a condition of the contract. I bind you to that."

"Very well. I treat it as binding," said Edith Alice Gordon, and swept out of the room.

Everything is possible if only one uses the little grey cells, says Hercule Poirot; and ten days could not last for ever. The first thing was this question of identification. To fulfil my contract I did not, of course, need a passport in the name of Edith Alice Gordon. It need not even be a British passport, for Edith Alice Gordon could be just the pen name of that attractive creature who could actually be married to a Hungarian and have a Hungarian passport, like Putti, for instance.

But I could not very well use my own wife's passport, even so, for she was about as much like Edith Alice as Claudette Colbert is like Mae West.

I could tear off Putti's photograph of course, and replace it with Edith Alice's, but that would be a serious offence against the law. It was illegal anyway to use some one else's passport.

Finally I decided to take my own passport with me. If a police officer wanted to see it then I should be obliged to tell him the whole story, and to show him my copy of the contract. As far as the hotel management was concerned, it would be good enough that I was a foreigner in possession of a passport, the number of which they could put down in writing. They would not care much in whose name the passport was made out, and if for any unexpected reason they did—well, then I would have to tell them the whole story too. That would not be very pleasant, for they would certainly talk about it, even if they did not

make actual trouble. Still, it was better than going to gaol for using a false passport. Then there was the question of clothes: I needed an entire outfit. Putti wrung her hands in despair, but she did her utmost, and managed to get splendid and breathtaking results out of her dress-maker.

Then one Sunday we gave out that I was going to Vienna, when in actual fact Edith Alice Gordon took quarters in a hotel on the Kurfürstendamm. They were very nice and polite to the giant Englishwoman. I unpacked, and the first thing I did was to leave a large tin of Huntley and Palmer's cakes conspicuously on the table in token of my genuineness. Shaving tackle and—in spite of Putti's warning—a box of strong Brazilian cigars I locked up carefully. At least at night and safely in bed I wanted to be able to smoke just one cigar. I would leave the windows wide open, and if, even in spite of that, the maid should smell the smoke and Miss Gordon should therefore acquire a somewhat dubious reputation, that was the worst that could happen, and that I felt I could bear. My estimate of the attention paid to my passport at the hotel was right: they just wrote down its number without looking inside at all. I telephoned to the editor from my room, and told him that I had just checked in safely. I talked in my husky Iris Storm voice with a slight English accent, and he was so enthralled and began to fire so many double meanings at me that I cut off at once. I should have been done for straight away if the operator had been listening in, but luckily she had not been.

Then followed the ten strangest days of my life. I did precisely everything that Edith Alice Gordon would have done—to the best of my knowledge and belief, and as wholeheartedly as I possibly could. I began the day with that wonderful English invention, the five-course breakfast, then went sightseeing all over Berlin, to Wannsee,

Potsdam, and Sans Souci, to the Havel lakes and the Spreewald, and paid visits to museums and historically interesting parts of the town. I made the old discovery that one can live for thirty years in a town without knowing it, and that a stranger is bound to get quite a different impression of it from one's own. I had long talks with guides, innkeepers, and market women, all from an English point of view.

It was not always very easy to transpose myself so utterly, but there the disguise helped a lot. It did force one to play a part consistently, although I never got entirely used to it. But I have come to the conclusion that even real women never get quite used to themselves either. Every new dress is a sort of disguise for them, so that they never lose their consciousness of self. High heels make their gait uncertain and unsafe, earrings dangle, bracelets click, silk scarves flutter in the wind: they live in a constant state of exposure, feel themselves watched, and—want to be watched. The mouth is not just the opening for speaking, eating, and drinking, but a carefully painted ornament, a decoration to catch and hold the glance. The eyes are what in certain breeds of fish are glimmering dots—instruments of enticement. The whole being is constructed to attract, to entice, and not only will-power, but tact and a very accurate cognizance of self make the laws and rules of the game. A very accurate line has to be kept. A woman is physically a thousand times nearer to making a fool of herself than is a man: a smile too much, a little movement too much, and she is in for it. It is a career of perpetual acting to be a woman, and woe to the actress who overplays her part.

The consciousness of attractiveness brings a woman nearer to nature than a man, and makes her instinct, that famous woman's instinct, increase and sharpen. She must find it sweet to be able to say all sorts of silly things and

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make something charming out of them by just a glance, a little movement of her shoulders, the flick of her handkerchief, while the selfsame words would automatically damn a man.

Equal rights? Let us say the same amount of rights, because they will be always of a different sort. Professions for women? Women doctors, inventors, pilots? There is still an odalisque left in every genuine woman, and let us be thankful that it is so.

III

Those ten days could have been splendid fun, but for little tiresome things like shaving three times a day and keeping it a dead secret; smoking miserable little cigarettes in an ivory holder, instead of the noble tobacco of an eight-inch cigar; and keeping on getting the sickening feeling that some one had suddenly seen through the disguise, though luckily no one ever did.

I never knew before how difficult it is to enter a dining-room or any other crowded room. It is impossible to be inconspicuous when one has just done one's very best with make-up, jewellery, and richly coloured evening dress to make oneself very conspicuous indeed. And I never knew before what a relief it is to slip out of one's shoes under the table and rest one's cramped feet.

At the hotel I spoke only English and everywhere else broken German, and after four days of it I had such a violent fit of homesickness for the life of a normal man that I very nearly gave up the whole thing. Luckily Putti come to see me that day, and over tea together I had so many funny little things to tell her that my own sense of humour came back to me.

My editor came one day and invited me to go to the opera with him, but I refused flatly.

"I'm here on business, not to enjoy myself," I said, but it was the *décolleté* dress at which I was really jibbing, and I think he knew it.

Only once in those ten days did I give my secret away, and then to an old friend of mine, a police inspector. Some years before I had haunted his office for days on end when collecting material for a novel about drugs. This time I asked him to take me with him on one of his strolls through the underworld of Berlin, and he was kind enough to do so after having convinced himself that my disguise was impenetrable.

We roamed through the most dangerous quarters in the north and east, spoke to criminals and prostitutes of the lowest type, even to a murderer just released after fifteen years' hard labour, and we visited the haunts of the so-called Ring Clubs, which are the gangs of Berlin. They had the most innocent names: "Concordia," "Harmony," and "Club for Social Life," and they had their own iron laws, their inter-club wars, and their celebrations—with hundreds of bottles of champagne. Only a fortnight before a lady belonging to the Concordia had been treated somewhat roughly by a gentleman belonging to the Harmony, and her dainty little nose had been broken. Two days later ninety gentlemen of the Concordia arrived in taxis at the haunt of the Harmony members—all of them in evening dress. They went in, gave every man in the place a thorough beating up, and daubed every woman there very thoroughly with blue paint. Then they left, content and satisfied.

Edith Alice Gordon was not lazy: she wrote her articles each evening until two or three o'clock in the morning, smoking fat Brazilian cigars. I liked what I was writing: when English people came to Germany they nearly always

went to the Rhineland or the Black Forest or sometimes to Munich; Berlin did not interest them very much. Now I was discovering Berlin, and there was a lot to discover, so much that the week was quickly gone. Then I hired a Mercédès for a three days' trip.

A few days before I had made the acquaintance of a young couple, South Germans, who had only been three weeks in Berlin. The girl's eyes sparkled so when I mentioned the Mercédès that I could not resist inviting them to come with me, and they were tremendously looking forward to the trip.

As always, I had made my astrological calculations. The journey was all right for the first two days, but on the third there was rather a bad aspect—Mars square sun. That sometimes brings the tendency of accident, and the position of Mars in my horoscope is not very good anyhow. I had a good look at the horoscopes of my guests, and *found a similar aspect*. I decided that I knew enough, and that we would return on the second day of the trip.

It was a charming drive. The girl enjoyed every minute of it, and her young husband did his very best to entertain two ladies. The poor young man had no idea that I was wishing him miles away, nor why.

We drove up to Rostock in Mecklenburg, then to Warnemünde on the Baltic sea, and there they told us so much of the beauty of Heiligendamm that the girl's eyes had begun to sparkle again. But to drive up to Heiligendamm meant prolonging the trip into the third day. And there the Mars aspect was waiting for us.

I thought it over for a while.

"I'll go with you to Heiligendamm," I said at last. "But on one condition: that we don't go faster than twenty miles an hour."

"Why not?" asked the husband curiously.

That started the subject of astrology, and they laughed

at me and my stars, but in such a nice and friendly way that I could not be annoyed. They had heard of it—oh, yes, naturally—but it was just a superstition, a very harmless one, of course. English women seemed to be rather queer about some things: another idiosyncrasy of Miss Edith Alice Gordon's, for instance, was the way she never let the young wife go into her bedroom in the mornings, and never wanted to dance with the young husband in the evenings; for I considered that obligations to my paper did not go as far as that.

I was insistent, however, on my condition for the drive, and they agreed to abide by it, so we drove to Heiligen-damm, spent the day there, and started back for Berlin in the late afternoon. It was rather tiresome, I will admit that: we crept like snakes along roads we had travelled three days earlier at fifty and sixty miles an hour. My companions were rather irritated, though they tried hard to conceal it.

Then as we were driving through the village of Wusterhausen a wheel came off. It was whipped away as by the pressure of an unseen hand and rolled into the window of a little soap shop. Our driver was able to pull up in three or four yards, but if we had gone through that village at the same speed as three days ago——

"I'm going straight out to buy a horoscope to-morrow," said the girl, who was shaking all over as she got out of the car. Her husband nodded.

At any other time I would have laughed at the idea of buying a horoscope as one buys a cake of soap—"I shouldn't advise that thin soap, madam, the thicker quality lasts much longer"—but just then I did not feel at all like laughing. I was still very far from being out of danger.

A car accident in Wusterhausen! The entire population of the village gathered round us, and there came the policeman, quiet and dignified, his notebook in hand, his

pencil sharpened, and I was Miss Edith Alice Gordon, and he was going to take down my name and address. On the last, the tenth, day of the whole adventure that had to happen to me! I saw myself arrested, I saw the notice in the papers——

Out of a little house came a fat old woman and said, "Won't you come in and 'ave a bit of a rest, ma'am? You're that white . . . !"

I believed her, in spite of my lavish make-up, got thankfully out of the car, and followed her into the house, leaving the driver to explain the accident to the policeman. After all, I argued, Miss Gordon was not the owner of the car; she had simply hired it, and she had not been driving herself.

After a while the young wife came in with the comforting news that the policeman had gone, and that we could start off again in half an hour. Her husband was helping the driver.

My kind old lady, having given me a glass of brandy, then seized the opportunity of telling me what certainly was her best story—how she had borne her three children. She told it me with full details as one woman to another, but I had already got long past embarrassment at heart to heart talks. In Rostock the wife of the hotel manager had told me that it was time that ladies like myself should come and show that sleepy little town what fashion was demanding of the modern woman. I very soon found out that this was with reference to the particular red varnish on my nails which she ardently envied, for her husband was absolutely intolerant of such frivolities. Then in a Warnemünde restaurant the violinist had come up to our table and played a solo for me until my efforts to choke back wild laughter had nearly given me away. So I was pretty well hardened to all manner of strange things, and yet my fat hostess surpassed them all.

She asked me, after the story of the birth of her third baby, if I had any children, and I said, "No."

"And why not?" she asked rather severely. "Life isn't made for pleasure only, ma'am, beggin' your pardon—an' you look such a nice strong young woman. Why, you're just *made* to have a baby, you are!"

I do not know how I managed to get out of the room. I focused my whole mind on to the order "I must not laugh. I must not laugh," and for a last time my reflexes obeyed.

Two hours later I dropped my friends at the hotel, had the rest of my luggage brought down, and drove home. Putti had seen to it that none of the servants should be there when I arrived.

Shouting like a Sioux after all the whispering and lisping of the last ten days, I got out of skirts and silk underwear, had a bath, put on tails, lit one of my longest Havanas, and went out with Putti. It was like being reborn. It had been very interesting, of course, full of experiences, and great fun too, but I should not like to repeat the experiment. To have lived for ten days as a woman is quite enough for me.

The young couple I met again six months later at a party. I talked to both of them, but even now they still do not know that I was that tall Englishwoman who had travelled with them for three days, and who might have died with them but for astrology.

All my articles had been handed in, and the editor was delighted with them. He confessed later that he had not expected me to bring it off. He also told me that he was going to print the first article on the 1st of February, but he did not: none of my articles has ever appeared. For on the 30th of January came the National-Socialist revolution. Within two days the face of Berlin had changed completely: brown, black, and grey uniforms were every-

where; the Ring Clubs disappeared into the concentration camps. If Edith Alice Gordon had come then to Berlin she would have had to write about quite different things—if she was able. The articles had lost reality.

I pass over the next year. It would be impossible to record anything of the year 1933 without discussing and analysing National Socialism, which towered over everything, even over the closest and most intimate friendships and the private work of every person living in Germany. And I do not want to do that. This is not a political book: it is the life story of a man who grasped life wherever it seemed to be interesting. Politics were no longer interesting in Germany, because nobody had the permission or the chance of doing anything about it. I personally never wanted to: I was a Hungarian, and therefore a guest in Germany, and as a guest my duty was reserve and discretion, and this duty I feel even to-day, although I believe that I have left Germany for good and may never see it again. All I do wish to record is that I left Germany in September 1935 entirely voluntarily and unmolested. That is all.

Something interesting from an astrological point of view, however, happened to me in 1933. In the autumn of that year I had a last good aspect of Jupiter and wanted to make the best of it, so I drove on the exact day indicated to Neubabelsberg and paid a visit to Ufa studios there.

I met Alfred Zeisler—later in London—who was then supervising the biggest film of the year, in which more than a million marks had been invested. The film was called *Gold*, he told me, and was to be a thrilling story about a man who had found the way to 'make' gold by the destruction of atoms.

"Not an easy theme," I hazarded.

Zeisler sighed, but he was full of hope, for he had retained Menzel for the scenario, and Menzel was very gifted. He, Thea von Harbou, and I were the leaders in the scenario world.

I asked Zeisler for his birth date, and then told him that he had the conjunction Jupiter-sun, a marvellous aspect, which made the success of his work quite certain. This cheered him up, although he did not think much of astrology in those days.

The day went by without anything special happening, and I admit to feeling a little disappointed in the ineffectiveness of such a strong aspect as mine had been. Then three weeks later Zeisler rang me up and asked me to join him as soon as possible at Schloss Marquardt, a charming castle near Berlin, where he was working with his staff of collaborators.

I went: Menzel did not seem to have got on very well with the director of the film, Karl Hartl; they did not like his scenario, and they wanted me to work out a new one. They told me the story: it was a very difficult theme indeed, and the time left was terribly short. Some of the exteriors had already been shot, colossal and elaborate sets were already up in the studios, and had to be used—one of them, a utopian machine for the production of artificial gold, had alone cost a hundred thousand marks—and so many actors were already under contract. The scenario, therefore, had to be written within all those limits. It was a thankless task, but it came from that aspect I knew so well—and I said yes.

As long as I was able to work with the director everything went splendidly. But then Hartl had to start shooting the scenes which were ready, for every extra day of delay was costing thousands. So I could not go on going through the new scenes with him, but had to work them

out by myself and send them to him. He was very difficult to get on with under those conditions, for he was accustomed always to share in the working out of his scenes. Things ceased to go smoothly, and Zeisler wrung his hands and prophesied that the whole film would end in disaster.

One evening Hartl complained of headache, and asked for aspirin, a harmless enough remedy, one would have said. But one hour later he had a high temperature, and a dark red rash came out all over his face and his body. He could hardly open his eyes, and he looked so bad that we telephoned for a doctor, who gave him an injection. The next day he was much better, and quite all right again by the evening.

"He must have had a bad aspect," said Zeisler mockingly.

"He certainly must," I answered. "We can find out very quickly if you want to."

"How do you mean?"

I rang up my teacher Hoogerwoerd in the presence of Zeisler and Hartl, told him Hartl's exact birth date, and asked, "What sort of aspect had this man yesterday evening at nine o'clock?"

Hoogerwoerd calculated, and said after a few minutes, "It was Neptune square ascendant. Beware of all chemicals. There is an inclination to being poisoned. But the position of Neptune is a rather strong one. I don't think it can have been very serious."

"Please will you repeat that to the man himself?" I said, and handed the receiver to Hartl.

Zeisler was very much impressed, but he still did not believe me when I told him that *Gold* would be a success for him. He knew that he had enemies who were doing their best to ruin him, and to whom his difficulties were more than welcome.

A few days later the managing director himself announced that he was coming down to Neubabelsberg, and the assistant manager told Zeisler that this was probably the end, and that the film would be shelved.

"Do you still believe that *Gold* will be a success for me?" asked Zeisler rather bitterly.

"I do," I said quietly. He shrugged his shoulders.

The managing director came and asked to see the rushes. He saw them, congratulated Zeisler and Hartl enthusiastically, and put another five hundred thousand marks at their disposal with which to finish the film.

Shortly afterwards Zeisler became assistant manager of the entire Ufa productions, with a greatly increased salary. In 1935 he left Ufa and Germany voluntarily, and came to England, where I met him again and wrote *Crime over London* for him. He is a splendid organizer and, as they say in Germany, he has forgotten more about films than other producers will ever learn. I do not think that anyone has ever lost a penny when he was in charge of a production, and many have made big money through him.

A man who long ago discovered the value of astrology was Fritz Lang. In 1933 we worked together, and I think that in both cases it was the first time in our lives that we worked without a chance of our work bearing fruit. It was during a period when nobody in Germany knew what it was permissible to write: every day new books, plays, and films were banned, and newspapers had to close down for weeks, sometimes even for months, if they had fallen into disfavour with the authorities.

Fritz Lang and I met daily in his supermodern house in Dahlem and constructed an adventure story just for fun. Our imagination performed the queerest antics: ideas streamed up like rockets.

Then Lang left Germany, going first to Paris, and then

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to Hollywood, where *Fury* was his first film over there, an unforgettably impressive piece of work. It made me look forward to the day when I meet him again, and to the story I should like to write for him and with him.

CHAPTER IX

EASTWARD BOUND!

Seven sons—"Seven are murderers"—A Parsee who read Tolstoi—Parsee philosophy and religion—The thirteenth labour of Hercules—I meet Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu—My mission at Agra.

YOUR journey, Sidi, is a royal one, and what you know about mankind and things is the treasure of a king. But do not talk to me about women, for they are but dirt, whether they be young or old."

Thus spoke my worthy friend Hadj Lakdar Boughoughal in Biskra, and he stroked his grey moustache. His wife, whom he loved very dearly, in spite of his general views concerning her sex, was not allowed to leave her home more than three times a year, and then only heavily veiled, riding in a car, and in the company of either himself, his brother, or his eldest son.

Lallah ben Mbarrek, the black-bearded descendant of the Prophet, agreed with him in his remarks about women, and yet a woman had presented him with the greatest gift of all—with sons. I counted three of them, and at the same time inquired how many he had altogether.

"These three, Sidi."

Five minutes later a fourth walked into the room—eight years old—and shortly afterwards a fifth.

"Lallah, I'm surprised at you. You've told me a lie. How many sons have you really?"

He looked a bit ashamed.

"*Saba*—seven, Sidi," he admitted.

I shook my head.

"Why didn't you tell me so at once?"

After a while: "I did not want to make Allah angry," he said, "in boasting of the number of my sons."

In Biskra I got the idea for my novel *Blood Brethren*, and told the story first to a *gremium* of seven Arabs, and that in three languages: French (45 per cent.), Arabic (5 per cent.), and dumb show (50 per cent.).

Never before nor since have I had so attentive an audience. The *nargileh* circled from mouth to mouth—I personally did not enjoy that part particularly. To my right sat a man of the Bombara tribe with lips like a funnel, and the pipe always went to him before me. Later on he confessed to me that he was rather fond of hashish, and I asked him to get me some, which he did.

I smoked seven pipes, which is quite a lot, and waited for all sorts of sensations. After a while I felt rather sleepy and woke up after eleven hours as fresh as a daisy: no sensations, not even the ghost of a dream, so I was very disappointed. It was good hashish too—I showed some of it to a chemist afterwards—so I do not know why it did not work.

Some of the scenes of my novel were laid in the prison of Biskra, and I got permission from the French Government to visit it. A little thick-set Marseillais was governor, warder, clerk, and policeman all in one, while his wife did the cooking for him and his prisoners. He led me into a courtyard, where some thirty odd men stood staring sulkily at me. In one corner there were some piles of bread of which they might eat their fill; in another corner some buckets of water; in a third the latrine.

Then the telephone rang in the office, and my friend the governor left the courtyard, carefully locking the door behind him. And there I stood, among thirty odd criminals, mostly Arabs, but also a few negroes. They went on staring at me. I tried to talk to some of them, but they did not answer.

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After about a quarter of an hour my Marseillais friend came back and let me out. "What sort of crime have they committed?" I asked him. I assumed that they were the lighter cases, thieves perhaps, or beggars.

"Seven are murderers," said the governor casually. "Five have been already condemned by the court."

I admit to having felt a little retrospective shock: the seven, or at least five of them, need not have restrained their feelings as far as I was concerned in any way, since they were to be beheaded anyhow. They might so easily have planned to take a *roumi* (European) with them on their way to Allah's paradise.

Hadj Lakdar Boughoughal's opinion of women voices the opinion of the Orient. A woman is nothing: a toy, a beast of burden, at best a mother of sons. The East is cruel to women, with the secret slaughter of thousands of newborn girl babies in India, in China; the thousands of Indian widows who drag out a life of contumely and starvation. I have seen Arabs standing by the cellars of prostitutes in the Kasbah, the native quarter of Algiers, bargaining over the price of the women as one might bargain over the price of a piece of meat in a butcher's shop, only no decent piece of meat would be referred to in the terms the Arabs had for those women. Two francs is the average price—including coffee afterwards, three francs. . . .

I went east again in the autumn of 1934—this time to India on a crowded P. and O. boat.

I began the voyage by trying voraciously to learn the language, until a kindly little captain in the Indian Army explained that there were something like two hundred different languages and dialects in India. Then, true to my principles of never carrying useless luggage with me, I threw the grammar overboard, and began to look about me on the ship.

Somewhere off the rocky coast of Sardinia I saw an empty deck-chair with a book lying on it—Tolstoi's *War and Peace*. Now, I do not like Tolstoi: we seem to be inhabitants of different planets, as is proved straight away by the fact that he hated Shakespeare, whom I, on the contrary, extravagantly revere. But Tolstoi was a poet and a great thinker, and over that very matter of Shakespeare he proved that he was also a great character, for when several of his friends told him that his dislike of Shakespeare was due to the very bad Russian translation he promptly set to work and learned English—he was already an old man—for the sole purpose of reading Shakespeare in the original and doing him justice. After two years' work he felt ready for it, read Shakespeare from the first drama to the last comedy—and still could not stand him. . . .

But, though I myself did not like Tolstoi, I was interested to find out which of all the people on board did, for no one could call him light reading, and none of the people I had seen seemed to fit in with him. So I sat down in the chair next door and waited.

After perhaps half an hour I heard the rustling of a silken dress, and a young Indian woman appeared. Her skin was the colour of old ivory, her eyes large and very beautiful, her profile most delicately cut, and her every movement was music as she sat down in her chair next to mine and picked up her book.

She was a Parsee, daughter-in-law of one of the most powerful heads of that community, and he and her husband were also on board. I was introduced to all three of them the same day, and enjoyed their company very thoroughly during the remainder of the voyage to Bombay.

The father-in-law is a little like Mussolini to look at—a Mussolini with white hair and darker skin. His horoscope is that of a man born to lead. His birthday is the

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same as Bismarck's, and, like the German chancellor, he is possessed of a tireless and impulsive energy, and has a dry sense of humour. He started penniless, and is to-day a personality well known throughout the whole of India. Even on board ship his shrewdness made itself felt. Shortly before we reached Port Said we received the wireless news that the King of Yugoslavia had been assassinated in Marseilles. There was a great deal of excitement on board and, since the Indian statesman was the only politician on the ship, every one crowded round and overwhelmed him with questions as to whether it would mean war, and if England would be dragged in again.

He smiled serenely and reassured the questioners, but quite quietly he wirelessly to his London stockbroker. He knew that the Stock Exchange was bound also to be in a state of excitement, for the shots fired in Marseilles had just the sound of the shots fired twenty years before in Sarajevo. But he knew too that the following day would see a reaction, for the shots fired in Marseilles were so much like the shots fired in Sarajevo that there would be bound to be some quietening action by the Government. So he bought that day and sold the next, and afterwards showed me the cablegrams which he received: the balance of his little transaction was very much in his favour. I did my very best to take a modest percentage off him at bridge, but he does not play that badly either.

In the evenings I used to have long discussions with him and his daughter-in-law Ratu about religion and philosophy, and I learned from them something of the teachings of Zoroaster. All the elements are sacred, but the most sacred one is Fire. For that reason dead bodies must not be buried, much less cremated, which would be desecration. So they are exposed in the Towers of

Silence, circular roofless towers, and the work of destruction is carried out by hundreds of vultures. After two hours only the skeleton remains, and that the ever-burning sun soon transforms into dust. And the ever-blowing wind carries the dust away.

So sacred are the Towers of Silence that not even the *mobeds*, the Parsee priests, are allowed to enter into the interior, where the corpses lie in three rows, one for men, one for women, and one for children. Only the eyes of the brown-winged, white-headed vultures may look on this, and that has been law for many hundreds of years. But this is the age of machinery, and it has brought us the fulfilment of an age-old dream—we have learned to fly. So it came about that the vultures of the Towers of Silence one day saw great birds in the sky, birds a hundred times bigger than themselves that roared and thundered in their headlong flight.

The vultures got accustomed to them very quickly, but the Parsees did not, for from aeroplanes people could look down into the sacred chamber; they could even take photographs. The Parsees complained. They are only a small community, but very good taxpayers and very loyal subjects, so a decree was issued that no aeroplane must fly over the Towers of Silence. A young pilot who disobeyed the decree was instantly dismissed. He tried to deny his disobedience, but the number of his aeroplane had been written down by the guardians of the Towers, and that was proof enough.

Besides the Towers of Silence, there is another building in Bombay over which no aeroplane is allowed to fly: the oil-tanks. And so the decree has it that all aeroplanes must fly over Bombay at a height of at least three thousand feet and on a line midway between the Towers of Silence and the oil-tanks—midway between romance and reality.

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Besides this care for their dead, the Parsees are very advanced in their charitable care of the living members of their own sect. They hold themselves answerable for their whole community; they have huge funds for their poor, and fine hospitals and sanatoria; and there are no Parsees performing menial functions—no sweepers, no prostitutes. Triple purity is the quintessence of their lives: purity of mind, purity of words, purity of action.

And they are progressive: Ratu, for instance, pilots her own aeroplane in Bombay, and drives her Cadillac.

II

We all know of the twelve tasks which Hercules was ordered to perform by his cousin, King Eurystheus: he had to kill a particularly ferocious lion, to catch a wild boar with his bare hands, to clean the Augean stables, and to shoot the Stymphalids, a kind of animated aeroplane in the shape of birds who, as far as I can remember, actually shot at people with their own sharp feathers. In addition he had to get some of the youth-preserving apples of the Hesperides for his cousin, and during that expedition to Morocco he trod a narrow neck of land into the sea, and thus procured for the British peoples their naval base Gibraltar. There followed other and equally Herculean tasks, of which we all have heard, but I do not know if many people realize that Hercules performed yet another deed upon a certain day in October 1934.

On that day the passengers of a seventeen-thousand-tonner looked round them in amazement. Fog—fog in the Suez Canal was a most rare sight.

The ship was rung down to dead slow: a big hawk circled round her funnels, his wings mere shadows; the whole scene was weird, uncanny. Here and there the

fog thinned; to port there were mountains faintly visible, Arabian mountains—Asia. To starboard the land was flat; I could see a few tents, a little troop of camel riders—Egypt, Africa.

The Canal had become a lake: we were moving through the bitter lake—no easy water that. The little French pilot was cursing, for he had no more than a yard's difference between the lake's depth and the ship's draught. Again the fog thinned, showing the banks startlingly close.

Suddenly there was a dull shock; in the dining saloon a steward spilled a plate of porridge over a lady's head; in the lounge, on deck, in cabins and corridors, passengers looked at one another, many showing paler faces.

Five minutes—ten minutes—we did not move.

A spinster giggled, "This is the eleventh time I've been through the Canal—at last I know what it is like to be shipwrecked."

Some of us laughed, but none of us were very happy: there were too many on board who realized that the position was none too pleasant.

The white uniform of a ship's officer came by. "Yes, we have run aground on a sandbank. We are stuck. How long? We shall probably get off in half an hour on our own. If not? Well, then a tug'll come from Ismailia; that's only a stone's-throw from here."

It sounded all right, and when, a few minutes later, our engines started up again we were all convinced that we should not need any tug from Ismailia or anywhere else.

"We are moving——"

"No!"

"But I feel it! I feel it quite distinctly!"

"What you feel is the vibration of the engines, that's all. We haven't moved an inch. But the tug is already

on its way here—it'll be here in an hour or so. A ten-thousand-horse-power tug—that'll shift us all right."

One hour later the tug arrived—the *Titan*, a black chap with a colossal funnel, brute force itself. A steel hawser was grappled to us; the *Titan* steamed off. The rope tightened, tightened——

Titan foamed and spluttered; our siren uttered a short howl by way of encouragement, and our engines started up again, full steam ahead, to help old *Titan*.

Ten minutes; a quarter of an hour.

"Nothing doing," said some one. "Absolutely nothing doing."

He voiced what all of us had been thinking for some time, but we had not wanted to admit it even to ourselves, because we did not know what could possibly happen if *Titan* failed to get us off.

The officer appeared again, as bright and merry as before, but his jokes did not sound very convincing.

The cargo? No, they won't unload it—not yet. They have wirelessly for another tug—from Port Said. But it will be several hours till it arrives. For Port Said is not a stone's-throw from here. . . .

At half-past six it grew dark, and a ceiling of green velvet hung over us. The stars glittered mockingly. Ship after ship had passed us, hundreds of passengers had stared at us, half pityingly, half disdainfully.

Another ship came by, raising a sudden shout of fury from fifty, a hundred voices, for she was the *Carthage*, a sister ship of ours, and she had left Marseilles twelve hours behind us and now she was going to pass us. That really roused us: the most elderly and most standoffish ladies shrieked and yelled with rage.

At eleven o'clock we saw a cloud of smoke—the tug from Port Said at last—the *Hercules*. He came chugging up, the cousin of King Eurystheus become a tug; poor

Hercules fallen on bad times! A hero of royal blood, the son of a god, had been forced to become a tug, just like his age-old enemy Titan, the father of Prometheus.

He greeted us with a short jeering howl, and *Titan* howled back. Our siren uttered something like a hollow sigh: we had grown sceptics. . . .

Hercules made no fuss, but straightway grappled us with his steel hawser. *Titan* too went to work again, and then such battle started as I have never seen in my whole life.

Twenty thousand horse-power pulled and hauled and pulled again, but the sand-demon held tightly with a million unseen arms. Again our engines started up, adding another twenty thousand horse-power to the strength of *Titan* and *Hercules*. The whole ship trembled and shivered, and we lined the rail, trembling and shivering with excitement too. The two giants were all foam and splutter; the whole of the bitter lake was all foam and splutter. *Titan* roared; our siren howled; and then *Hercules* howled too, a long, long war-cry—very near to what the war-cry of the divine hero may have been in those ancient times.

We looked at one another, afraid to believe, afraid of another disappointment. Then a woman's voice cried out, and suddenly we too felt, we too knew, we were moving, we were coming off, the shore was already much farther away. We were free!

Six hundred passengers yelled gratitude like a Sioux Indian tribe; they clapped their hands; they danced with joy. *Hercules* uttered a short grunt of good-natured pride: he had fulfilled another task.

III

Bombay was a kaleidoscope of parties and receptions, cabarets at the Taj Mahal Hotel, a charming evening

in the glamorous Malabar Hill house of my Parsee friends.

Congress was holding its meetings in a suburb outside Bombay, and there I went three times to meet Gandhi. On the first occasion he was holding a council of war with his lieutenants and leaders; my second visit was on a Monday, but Mondays are his days of silence on which he opens his mouth only for food and drink; but on the Tuesday I finally succeeded in seeing him after much parley with his bodyguard, which reminded me oddly of Hitler's S.A. They had greenish uniforms, peakless caps, and, of course, bare feet.

My interview with their master lasted for ten minutes only. He was just retiring once and for all from politics, or so it was announced in October 1934, and he was kept pretty busy. He struck me as the strangest mix-up I have ever seen, and, apart from the extraordinary strength of his personality, I think that his particular blend must be unique—half lawyer and half saint; pure, but sly; kindly, but shrewd; elastic as an eel, hard as stone; the epitome of ugliness, but with real charm in his smile in spite of many missing teeth.

Around him I saw fanatical eyes, ecstatic glances, soft lips, tender, almost feminine movements—but no brains. All they were concerned with was ministering to him, washing and massaging the feet of him they called the leader of the Indian people, not realizing that there can be no such phrase as 'an Indian *people*'—there are only many peoples living in that vast and wonderful country which is India.

Gandhi himself seems to me to be much more the man of passive resistance than the man of active deeds. To me his chemical consistence shows that as well as his life. He is no fighter—he is a self-made martyr. He is not steel or iron, but impregnated rubber or asbestos, a silk

cushion, impossible to smash with the heavy European sword. Who wants to defeat him must surely set an Oriental on him, like to like.

Nearly a week later I saw Gandhi again, this time at the railway station as he was leaving. Indian politicians were talking to him, thanking him for his work, bidding affectionate farewell. One of them kissed the hem of his *dhoti*, but Gandhi himself did not say a word, for it was Monday again. Suddenly he whipped the cap from the head of a five-year-old boy and put it on the bald pate of old Vallabhai Patel. Then he giggled delightedly, climbed into his compartment, waved once or twice, and then retired into the train.

I was not able to see the other Congress leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, for he was then in gaol, but I heard that one of India's most famous women—Sarojini Naidu, poetess and politician—was staying like myself at the Taj Mahal Hotel. The Indian nightingale they call her. I arranged an interview, but when I went to her room I was met by a young and pretty girl, rather dark-skinned, with lips of a flaming red, and dressed in the orange-coloured gown of a Congress woman.

"My mother is not back from Congress yet," she said, "but I'm expecting her any minute now. How do you like Bombay? Have you seen our great little man? Oh, you are an author! What sort of books do you write? Have you written any detective stories? My mother is frightfully fond of detective stories. When she was in gaol I had to take her lots and lots of them."

Further subjects of discussion were hotel bedrooms, railway journeys, cars, and literature: it was Mayfair with a little dash of Kurfürstendamm and the Champs Élysées.

Then the door opened and a stout little woman came in, murmured a few words of greeting, and fell heavily into the nearest chair. The Indian nightingale was clad

in the same orange-coloured dress as her daughter. Her face was dominated by her beautiful dark eyes and her fine forehead. The next hour might have been grand, but Sarojini Naidu was tired, nervous, worn out. She had been at the Congress all the morning; she had spoken to the masses and talked to the leaders. When I said that I was going to Agra the next day she nearly jumped to her feet.

"Why are you going there of all places? To gaze at the Taj Mahal, a tomb, a mausoleum! One oughtn't to come to India to see dead things, things of the past. Here in Bombay is India, the living India, the India of to-day and to-morrow, in Bombay, at Congress. If you are a writer—*this* must interest you. And nothing else."

She was in fighting trim, the venerable old lady, and evidently not in a very good mood, so I took leave in less than half an hour.

India! Mrs Naidu and her daughter are international types. I have heard the same sort of things said by Egyptian Wafd leaders, seen the same indifference to a glorious and romantic past. And I can easily imagine that Mrs Pankhurst would have said exactly the same to a foreigner visiting England if he had been incautious enough to show interest in Westminster Abbey instead of the feminist movement.

On the day of Gandhi's departure I saw a group of three women on the station. They were wearing long flowing gowns, blue, red, and yellow, and it was impossible to see even an inch of their skin. Where one imagined the face to be was a sort of visor of gold strings, so closely meshed that nothing could be seen even of the eyes, which at least one can admire in Arab women in North Africa. These women were Mohammedans. Motionless they waited, motionless and silent until a conductor asked them to enter the train; then they got in

without showing so much as the tip of their shoes. The conductor closed the door of their purdah compartment, which had the usual narrowly latticed windows, and the train left. On the morrow, somewhere in Ajmere or Jaipur, a rich Moslem will receive his three wives, a blue, a red, and a yellow parcel.

IV

As a matter of fact, Sarojini Naidu had done me injustice: I was not going to Agra simply to stare at the Taj. I had a very special mission there.

When I said good-bye to the editor of a Berlin newspaper shortly before starting my journey to India he said, "I wish you'd try and find out something about the German Maharajah, will you?"

"About *who*?"

"Seems there was once a German Maharajah."

"Don't be silly."

"It's a fact, old chap. We've a short article about it somewhere—twenty lines. I'll get it for you."

The article was about an Alsatian of the name of Reinhardt who, after all sorts of adventures, had become an Indian prince, and his tomb was said to be in Agra.

"If you can find out anything about this," said the editor, "it would make a fine story. Details are what we need—details."

So I did not visit Agra just to see the Taj, and yet when finally I did I was ashamed that it had not been so.

I went there on a night of full moon, driving along the silent streets of the sleeping town. I passed through the giant courtyard, with its huge gateways of reddish marble, to the broad and solemn staircase with a growing feeling of anticipation, scepticism fading fast away in the astounding silence. My own small steps on the cool marble

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made the only sound in that vast stillness as I passed the giant door, moved on a little. Then they too died away as I stood still where I was to look upon the moonlit Taj, that pearl-pale monument to long dead love—a fragile dream caught in the instant of its birth, transmuted into a lovely permanence that man may see.

I wandered there all night, among the gardens where a thousand bulbuls sing hidden among scented flowers; where tall black cypress-trees guard each approach to the chiselled loveliness of Mumtaz Mahal's tomb, set high above its sacred river. I looked across to that small window where, dying, the prisoner Shah Jehan kept ever fixed his eyes upon the dream which he had created in memory of that dead queen. And I looked inward upon myself that serene night, alone with so much beauty that a man had made, that somehow washes away the petty things, the meanness of the outside world, that cries a message of constructive life, a true rebirth, to him that hath ears to hear.

CHAPTER X

AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY GERMAN MAHARAJAH

Walther Reinhardt, the Strasbourg carpenter, reaches Pondicherry in a French troopship—Changing sides—The English place a price on his head—Samru—Mir Kasim gives him command of the army—Treachery of the Nawab of Oudh—The girl spy—Samru escapes—He is presented with the principality of Sardhana—His death in 1778—His tomb at Agra—A strange postscript.

THE next afternoon I started my search for the trail of the German Maharajah. It led me first to an old Roman Catholic monastery near the cemetery; later on to the German Consulate-General in Calcutta, where I was allowed to go through many old documents. And from out of the old books of the monastery library and the papers and documents in the Consulate rose a story which a writer would be hard put to it to invent: the following story of an amazing eighteenth-century gangster.

Round the Cape of Good Hope sailed a French troopship. The sea had been rough for many days, and most of the soldiers were sick. They were a strange crowd, united only by the French uniform: Italians, Belgians, Swiss, Germans, many of them men who had had to leave their countries for very good reasons. Gaol might be waiting for them there, or even the hangman's rope: adventurers, good-for-nothings, *condottieri*, with weeks and weeks of sailing behind them and just as many ahead of them.

"Land," murmured Gentil, the little man from Provence. "One sees land so near. And yet one must go on sailing on this confounded ship. . . ."

"That's Africa over there," said another one, a strong, broad-shouldered fellow. "What would be the good of landing in Africa? You won't find any diamonds and rubies there, you won't, believe me!"

"Who knows if we'll ever reach India? Another storm like that one yesterday and the sharks'll get us."

"And who knows if it's true what the crimps said—about jewels and women and all that?"

The broad-shouldered one shook his head. "It is true," he said. "I *know* that it is true. I've dreamed of it."

They looked at him with curious eyes. A strange sort of fellow he was, that German: he would drink and throw dice just as they did—and better—but always, even in his best mood, there was some sort of invisible barrier between him and his comrades. And yet in the recruiting list he figured only as carpenter. He was of simple birth, unable to write or read; but when he began to talk of his dreams then he seemed different somehow, then uneasily his comrades felt him somehow set apart.

"Pondicherry," he said in a low voice. "There one can find luck and riches on the very streets. Ever heard of Monsieur Dupleix?"

"The Governor?"

"Yes, the Governor. At twenty-four he was already in the Supreme Council. At *my* age! And I sit here with you, eating and boozing and sleeping, and being just a bit of dirt—like you are."

"And why, may I ask?" jeered Madee, a clumsy, tall Irishman. "Why do you think that you are any better than we are, Reinhardt? One would think you were the Great Mogul himself to hear you talk!"

"Dupleix was given the title of 'Nawab' by the Great Mogul," said Reinhardt quietly. "He has got diamonds as big as pigeons' eggs, and rubies and sapphires—everything you can think of. He lives like a prince too."

"Well, now we know what you are up to! Nawab Walther Reinhardt—doesn't sound too bad, does it? What do you want us to call you—your Highness? Your Grace?"

Reinhardt frowned, and his dark eyes looked so threatening that they stopped mocking, feeling anew that there was something uncanny about him.

"Uncanny? Nonsense! I know what's wrong with him. A friend of mine from Strasbourg told me all about it—he's got gipsy blood in his veins."

But Walther Reinhardt was not listening: he was sitting in the bows, staring ahead. He had a rather ugly face, broad, with strong cheekbones, a turned-up nose, and dark, deep-set eyes. Maybe they were right about his gipsy blood.

At Pondicherry the troopship was greeted with enthusiasm. For many months there had been war in the air—war with England. It was known from reliable sources that the East India Company in Madras was preparing a sudden attack on Pondicherry. At the eleventh hour Dupleix had succeeded in making an alliance with the powerful Nawab of Carnatic, which had checked the English, but now war had been declared, and the troopship had come just in time for the French to take the initiative.

The commander of the French army was La Bourdonnais, a great fighter, the former Governor of Mauritius. Governor Dupleix, who was no soldier himself, suppressed his jealousy, and held a council of war with him. The English had omitted to bribe the Nawab, so that he would at least remain neutral.

The council decided that it was time to strike, so that only a few days after their arrival in India the soldiers of the troopship were ordered to march on Madras.

This march took them through a country of which no one knew very much. There were wild rumours about it in Europe: demons and all manner of devils were said to live there; vampires with six arms, that sucked a man's blood at night; mysterious poisons; sects which sacrificed men in honour of a terrible goddess.

The soldiers knew all these things, but they did not care much. They were marching on Madras, and they knew very well what Madras was—a town where lived a quarter of a million peaceful Indians, people who had never done any soldiering. There was one little fort there, with a garrison of only two hundred men. Easy work, that. And then the way would be open to the big bazaars with all their silks and silver, their gold and jewels. And the houses of the directors of the East India Company—those men who made millions out of the country round. It was significant that they had coined a special word for the figure a hundred thousand in business—a *lakh*—another special word even for ten millions—a *crore*. Madras was rich, rich, rich.

The soldiers sang on their march.

The English had got wind of the French attack. They hurried messengers to the Nawab of Carnatic, but that illustrious gentleman was 'not at home.'

The French troops arrived, and after a bombardment of three days and three nights the little garrison, commanded, oddly enough, by a Swedish officer, surrendered. La Bourdonnais entered Madras at the head of his army.

A young clerk in the East India Company could not bear the shame of the defeat, and while the French were looting the town he disguised himself as a native and escaped. A few years later his name was the most famous in India: he became the deadliest enemy of great princes, even of the Great Mogul himself; he conquered one rich country after the other for England, and England would

not be what she is without him. For he was the founder of the British Empire in India—Robert Clive, later Baron Clive of Plassey.

While this man, then but a junior clerk, was escaping from Madras another man, a man with curly black hair and dark deep-set eyes, marched into the town with the victors. He wore a fresh badge on his left sleeve: Walther Reinhardt had become a sergeant for 'bravery in face of the enemy.' It was the first step to one of the strangest careers the world has ever seen.

They were mostly scum, the emigrants sent out to India by the European nations in those days, the English as well as the French, Dutch, and Portuguese. Their education and standard of living were mainly inferior to that of the Indians of the upper classes. They led only in one thing: they had that wild, reckless sort of energy, that elbowing activity that was to bring victory to the white race all over the world.

India had become somnolent in her inexhaustible wealth. Palaces were being built of marble and semi-precious stones. Cartloads of garnets, lapis lazuli, malachite, agates—stones which European women treasured in tiny fragments as precious jewels—were used in India for ornaments in temples, mausoleums, and palaces.

Indian philosophy, literature, and music were already flourishing when the ancient Britons were still painting themselves with woad, when the half-naked Germans were hunting the ureox with arrows and spears, and Hungarians were putting their daily beefsteak under their saddles so as to ride on it until it grew tender enough to be eaten.

Indian medical science had even in those days mastered plastic surgery, which became a part of modern European medicine only during the World War of 1914-18. While the mutilated soldiers of the Thirty Years War were

condemned to drag out the remainder of their lives with horribly mutilated faces, the Indians were already producing excellent artificial noses and ears. That, of course, was very important in a country where the cutting off of noses and ears was a popular punishment for all manner of crimes, where people were condemned to noselessness as to a present-day fine of twenty shillings for parking in the wrong place.

India seems always to have been the country of incredible contrasts. She was the ideal arena for adventurers of all the types who used to take service with one of the big European trading companies, or in the army, or in the civil service of one of the native princes. The lucky ones rose: the others died, either in one of the numerous wars or from cholera, plague, or malaria.

Sergeant Walther Reinhardt served with the French army for two years, after which he became completely bored. Nothing was done after the capture of Madras: it would have been *the* opportunity to put all India into the French pocket, for England had little time to spare for colonial questions, being very busy trying to check her defeats on European soil. If France had acted energetically then the map of India would have been another colour than the British pink, but the French troops were badly paid—very often not paid at all—and there were continual mutinies.

One day Sergeant Walther Reinhardt deserted to the English, taking his detachment with him. It was peacetime by then—at least, officially—but the English found a use for him and his tough fighters by putting them in with a detachment of Swiss and Portuguese mercenaries.

Very soon Reinhardt and his men saw that they had gone from bad to worse. It was the same pipe-clay, the same bad treatment, still less liberty, and no pay at all. There were rows and riots every day, and not only bare

fists were used. Once half a dozen Portuguese started a row with Reinhardt himself, and the grim, ill-tempered sergeant handled them so roughly that five of them had to be taken to hospital. He was arrested for that, but every one respected him afterwards. "Senhor Sombre" ("Mr Gloomy") the Portuguese nicknamed him. The native troops changed the word into 'Samru,' and that name stuck.

"Mr Gloomy" grew tired of the English even more quickly than he had of the French, so he deserted again back to the French, and again his entire detachment went with him. Things were very different then from nowadays: the French accepted him at once, no one was punished for the first desertion, and they were sent as a reinforcement to Chandernagore. A fresh outbreak of war was daily expected, and men of the calibre of Reinhardt and his troop were too badly needed for much trouble to be made over a small matter of desertion.

II

There was war again. The British fleet sailed up the Hooghly, and the commander of the British forces was that same man who had a few years before fled from Madras in the disguise of a native—Robert Clive; but this time his name was no longer unknown. He had been victorious in every action; even the powerful Nawab of the three provinces Bengal, Orissa, and Bihar, the viceroy of the Great Mogul himself, Suraj-ud-Dowlah, the Sun of the State, had every reason to respect him.

The Nawabs knew very well that their military power was inferior to that of the European nations, so they played the age-old game of setting each against the other.

Suraj-ud-Dowlah was a very young ruler much given to luxurious living. He had an enormous harem, which

his agents had to supply continually with girls of every variety from the ivory-coloured beauties of Kashmir to the earth-brown maidens of Bengal and the golden-yellow ones of Burma. This harem interested Suraj-ud-Dowlah much more than did politics, which he regarded as a tiresome business, full of disagreeable and undignified excitements. Moreover he hated to have to make decisions. This was the man of whom Clive had to make sure before attacking Chandernagore, and it was very uphill work; but eventually Clive succeeded with the help of a native banker, Omichand, in bribing the Nawab's secretary. This man so phrased one of his master's letters, in reality an injunction *not* thus to attack the French, that Clive was able to read in it whatever he chose to interpret. That was good enough for him.

The French were working to get the much-neglected fortifications of Chandernagore ready for action; they placed cannon everywhere, even on top of the church; they installed shore batteries, and sank several ships in the Hooghly to bar its passage to the British fleet.

Reinhardt with his detachment was working day and night. His commander was Captain Terreneau, an excellent soldier, who continued on active service in spite of having lost an arm.

Sergeant Walther Reinhardt came to this man and told him that the sinking of the ships in the Hooghly had been very clumsily done.

"There is still a channel left where the British can pass, *mon capitaine!*"

His reward for being so observant was that Terreneau turned on him angrily saying that all he had to do was to obey orders when and as they were given. From then on Reinhardt watched for an opportunity to escape, for he was firmly convinced that there was treachery afoot. He was right. Terreneau, the man who had sacrificed

one arm for France, had been bribed, and on the 13th of March, 1757, the English fleet sailed through the little channel he had left open for them.

Ten days later came the fall of Chandernagore. The English, less broadminded than the French as regards deserters, searched the town very eagerly—but Reinhardt and his men escaped in time.

From then on began his real career. The English had set a price on his head. He knew this and enjoyed the idea: it flattered his pride. The French gave the man who had saved his detachment from being captured in Chandernagore more men and bigger tasks. His commander was now Jean Law. But in spite of his still subaltern position he felt himself already the real antagonist of Clive. He thought of Clive as lucky, extremely lucky: he had the money to bribe those whom he could not otherwise defeat.

"More men," thought Reinhardt. "If I only had more men—I'd show him."

Clive went on being lucky: and, what is more, he was a genius, and not handicapped by any sort of scruples. At Plassey he met the joint armies of the French and the Nawab. The Nawab alone had 40,000 infantry and 20,000 cavalry. His artillery consisted of 53 cannons under French command, and his special troops were hundreds of war elephants. These latter had still the same importance in the campaigns of Indian princes as in 326 B.C., when the Indian King Porus was fighting against Alexander the Great.

Clive's army was much smaller, but he had the better strategical position. He was a military genius, although he had never been a regular officer. And he had bribed Suraj-ud-Dowlah's uncle and most experienced general, Mir Jafar. On the evening before the battle the traitor sent him a pair of slippers with a message sewed in:

"I have understood and shall march according to your instructions."

That same evening Suraj-ud-Dowlah embraced and kissed his uncle with tears in his eyes.

"You alone can defend my crown," he said, having not the faintest suspicion of the other's treachery.

Then came Clive's crushing victory at Plassey, where only the French detachments fought to the bitter end.

I do not know how Reinhardt succeeded in again escaping death, but a short time afterwards he appeared at the court of the Great Mogul himself. He was no longer the little sergeant, the primitive carpenter from Strasbourg: he was a man who had learned the secret of success, of how to make a career in India.

"I must follow Clive's example," he said to Gentil. "There is only one difference: Clive has got his country behind him. And I have only you and Madee and Polier and the others. But I shall succeed all right."

He won friends for himself at court, without having money to do so, without a title, and certainly without having any personal charm. It is rather mysterious, and it was a mystery to his men also, for he was no more than a little soldier of fortune who had fought bravely and was the captain of a hundred and fifty first-class fighters.

"It's his gipsy blood," whispered his men. "When he is in danger the ancestress of all gipsies appears to him and warns him. He is proof against bullets and sword cuts."

Did Reinhardt believe that himself? Did he tolerate that rumour because it strengthened his influence?

III

Suraj-ud-Dowlah had been murdered after his defeat at Plassey—his uncle, Mir Jafar, had seen to that—and

in consequence there was held in Murshidabad the biggest auction of beautiful women which even the oldest grey-beards could remember.

Mir Jafar was the new Nawab—by the grace of Clive of England. At the Great Mogul's court the gravity of the situation was fully understood: it was realized that Europeans could only be beaten by Europeans, so while Clive was forming and training battalions of natives the nawabs were collecting all the dispersed French troops, all adventurers, all sailors and soldiers of fortune they could find.

Officially there was peace—of a sort. The English learned that a traitor will always remain a traitor: Mir Jafar, their man of confidence on the throne of Bengal, Orissa, and Bihar, started a conspiracy with the Dutch. The English dethroned him and put him in gaol in Calcutta, where it is said that his cell in the prison must have been infected with leprosy, since when he was needed again some years later for political reasons he had become a leper. In spite of that the old man—then over seventy—was proclaimed Nawab again.

When he was dethroned he was replaced by Mir Kasim, his ambitious son-in-law, and Clive, now a millionaire, sailed back to England. That was the beginning of a terrible period: many little English traders, imagining themselves to be little Clives, dictated their trading conditions to intimidated Indians. Dissatisfaction and unrest grew rapidly all over the country, and Mir Kasim decided on war.

Secretly he gathered troops at the North frontier, no lazy Bengalis, but Afghans, Persians, and Tartars. But he had no one to lead them, and Mir Kasim knew only too well how tactically inferior his generals were to the officers of the British army. Then he remembered a man who had fought like a demon under his very eyes at

Plassey. That man, though no general—not even an officer, but a simple sergeant—had commanded a hundred and fifty white soldiers and had covered the retreat when the battle was lost. Samru that man was called, and he had long before gathered round him a band of malcontents of every description, quite a large band. He had even fought in various skirmishes against the English and come out victorious. After the capture of a French officer, Jean Law, regular French troops too had joined his little army. He was a power which could not be overlooked.

Mir Kasim decided to give this man the supreme command of his troops, and there was nothing particularly unusual about this in 1763: had not Clive commanded the British army without having been an officer?

Mir Kasim's message burst upon Reinhardt's camp like a bombshell. Madee, Gentil, and Polier, the lieutenants, were wild with enthusiasm, and proposed a brilliant feast.

But Reinhardt, very pale, his eyes gleaming, said no.

"Much too much to do now. The time has come at last."

He had known that they would ask for him, had told his friends so again and again. His only regret was that Clive was out of the country, except that perhaps it was better so: it was bad policy to do everything at once.

Reinhardt worked feverishly. Mir Kasim had sent money, so that his troops could be provided with uniforms and rifles. Madee, Gentil, and Polier superintended the drilling; the camp was transferred to Monghyr, a fortress in the mountains, where was more safety against sudden attacks—and against spies.

Mir Kasim meanwhile undertook the diplomatic work, entering into communication with the powerful Nawab of Oudh. Unexpectedly the Great Mogul himself arrived,

and Mir Kasim with little effort won him over to support his plans: the army grew bigger and bigger.

While Clive was on his holiday in England, lavishly spending his Indian millions for a seat in Parliament, a mutiny was rising to threaten the destruction of all his work. And the military leader of that mutiny was the little sergeant of Madras.

IV

Next door to Reinhardt's tent was another, a smaller one, that Madee, Gentil, and Polier always passed with a twinkle in their eyes, for it belonged to a little brown-skinned woman. Reinhardt had picked her up somewhere in Murshidabab, and he never liked talking about it. His companions wondered if she were a nautch-girl, a temple dancer: or if perhaps she had once been in the harem of poor Suraj-ud-Dowlah.

"She has got him all right. And I always thought he had no use for women——"

"She's damned clever. Holds tight with her dainty claws."

It was rare now for Reinhardt to spend an evening with his officers. He was always in the little tent: he needed the presence of that little dark-skinned creature who had wrists and ankles like a seven-year-old child. He needed her limitless admiration, her limitless confidence in his future.

"You will be a great man," she had said. "I have asked Ram Bhatgar, the astrologer. When all around you fall you will rise!"

Reinhardt believed it. He knew it himself—a gipsy had prophesied it to him many years before—but it made him feel happy to hear it again. He was glad, too, that an astrologer had said so. In India every one believed in astrology, a horoscope being cast for every child at birth.

Every general, every prince, took his astrologer with him wherever he went.

It was the calm before the storm: Mir Kasim did not move, and the English did not move. It was—as so often—the action of a private individual which caused the outbreak of hostilities.

Mr Ellis, head of the Patna branch of the East India Company, was an ambitious and rather violent man, and he did not like the idea that Mir Kasim still had a little garrison of troops in 'his' town. He resented being watched, and acted accordingly.

Without even so much as informing Calcutta about it, he gathered two hundred Europeans and just as many sepoys, and actually attacked the citadel at night. After a short fight the little garrison surrendered, whereupon Mr Ellis's army started looting, as though it had been an enemy city captured in regular war. Brilliant festivals followed the looting.

Messengers on horseback brought the news to Mir Kasim, and the Mir sent at once for Reinhardt.

"Attack them," said the ex-sergeant. "Now or never, Nawab."

The same night the Mir's cavalry was rushed to Patna, where Reinhardt found, instead of English troops, only crowds of drunken men. The town became his, practically without a fight, and soon the citadel also. One hundred and fifty prisoners were taken—among them Mr Ellis.

Reinhardt made use of his opportunity: he straightway attacked the English settlements in Cossimbazar and Dacca, and more and more prisoners were brought in.

Then the English woke up. Their army left Calcutta, and Mir Kasim and Reinhardt retreated first to Monghyr,

then to the very frontier of Bengal. They took all their prisoners with them, among them the two brothers Sait, the richest bankers of Bengal, old friends of the English. The Saits implored Mir Kasim to grant them an audience.

He received them in his tent, and beside him stood Samru, cold and gloomy as always.

The Saits prostrated themselves: they knew that their papers had been searched and that the Mir knew that they had intrigued against him. Four *crore*, forty million rupees, they offered for their lives.

As the Mir hesitated a messenger arrived, dripping with sweat, bearing the news that the English had taken Monghyr, the fortress covering the left wing of the Mir's army.

The Saits went grey as ashes, but the Mir nodded at Reinhardt and left the tent. Quietly Reinhardt drew his pistol and shot the two bankers through the head.

The Mir then sent a messenger to Major Adams, the English commander, to say that if he continued his advance it would mean the death of the English prisoners.

Major Adams replied that the Mir would suffer for it if one hair of the prisoners' heads should be harmed, and he went on advancing.

Reinhardt-Samru was ordered to have the prisoners executed. So on the 5th of October, 1763, he surrounded the prisoners' camp with two companies of sepoys, and the butchery was begun. It was so terrible that Gentil begged Reinhardt to stop it: even the sepoys hesitated, and one of them asked Reinhardt if the prisoners could not be allowed arms too.

Sergeant Chateau threw his rifle away.

"I'm an enemy of the English, but no murderer!" he cried.

Reinhardt had him arrested and ordered the firing to proceed; he shot Ellis with his own hand.

Only four prisoners escaped, among them a doctor, Mr Fullerton.

Three weeks later the English recaptured Patna. Reinhardt covered Mir Kasim's retreat, and though the English pressed hard they did not get him. Then began the most dramatic period of Reinhardt's life. Once again the Mir tried to retake Patna, Reinhardt vainly laying siege to the town with five battalions of natives.

There was only one hope left—the powerful Nawab of Oudh, Vizier of the Grand Mogul himself, a cold, calculating tyrant whom Reinhardt at once distrusted. But for the moment the Nawab saw that his advantage lay in remaining on Mir Kasim's side, and so the Indian armies joined one another.

Slowly the English army advanced, now under the command of Major Munro, an excellent soldier. The decisive battle was at Buxar, where, after hours of fighting, the troops of the Nawab of Oudh fled. Mir Kasim could not hold the battle front alone, and so was forced also to retreat.

Reinhardt kept his best troops together, a plan of his own in mind.

In Oudh the defeated native armies gathered again, but Mir Kasim was heartbroken. His position at the court of the Nawab of Oudh was not much better than that of a prisoner, and there was a strange atmosphere in Oudh, where nobody knew what the Nawab was going to do.

Reinhardt had sent reliable men to the palace, for he wanted to be informed in time of what went on. He received information that two English officers had arrived for parley, but he could not find out what they or what the Nawab had said.

We know to-day that they had asked the Nawab to extradite Reinhardt: the blood of Patna had to be avenged.

The Nawab shrugged his shoulders.

"I cannot arrest a general in the middle of his troops."

But he wanted to do the English a favour, and so he offered to have Reinhardt murdered, but this was too Oriental a solution for the British officers, and they refused the offer.

Munro advanced, each skirmish ending in his favour, and the worse the situation became the worse the Nawab of Oudh treated Mir Kasim.

Reinhardt sensed treachery in the air, and sent his best spy to the palace, the girl of the little tent. Since hundreds of women were living in the palace the girl was able to slip unsuspected through the rooms, heard whispers here and there, found out where Mir Kasim's rooms were, and saw two soldiers in arms before them—a 'guard of honour.'

"Mir Kasim is a prisoner," she told Reinhardt. "And the Nawab's first wife said that there are messengers on their way to the English—he will deliver the Mir to them. And he will let the English troops pass on their search for you. He will not put up any sort of resistance."

Reinhardt paced up and down his tent. That meant that Mir Kasim was finished; would never come to power again. "Nothing doing against the English," thought Reinhardt. "That swine the Nawab of Oudh! Poor Mir Kasim!"

Reinhardt had liked him better than all the other masters he had served. He was the first who had really had confidence in him; he had made him a general; he had made the dreams come true, the dreams that Private Walther Reinhardt had dreamed when first he set sail on his ten months' voyage to India.

"Mir Kasim," he thought. "From him came the gold buried under my bed, the diamonds, rubies, emeralds—everything." One must do something for Mir Kasim. The situation was pretty bad with the English advancing daily

—God knows where they were now. No spies had been in for two days, and the Nawab of Oudh was a traitor. "They've got me in their pincers," thought Reinhardt.

In a corner a slim brown girl was sitting; he looked at her.

"Do you think you can risk getting into the palace again?"

The girl nodded, lifting her head sideways in the Indian fashion.

"I must know where the English are—how near they are!"

The girl slipped out of the tent without another word.

Reinhardt sent for Madee, Polier, and Gentil, and the faithful three came straightway, pale and uneasy, knowing that things were going badly.

Reinhardt was sitting slumped on his low divan. He had on a long grey coat of military cut with a black collar. On a little table were two heavy pistols—the ones he had used at Patna—and his sword. The contrast was striking between his simple dress and the gold-embroidered Indian gowns of his officers.

"The time has come," he said hoarsely. "We must march, children."

The officers looked at one another.

"Against whom?" asked Gentil.

"Against everybody. We are outlawed. Oudh is too hot for us. I'm just waiting for a certain message, and as soon as I've got it—we quit. Warn your officers—everything must be ready for action."

"How much of this can we tell the officers?" asked Madee.

"Just give the order to make ready. They are responsible for that—that's all. This is war, isn't it?"

The three understood.

Night came, and still the girl had not returned. Reinhardt sat just as his officers had left him, forcing himself

to be calm and to wait. There was nothing to do. He called for wine—an increasing habit with him. There was talk in the army about those lonely banquets of the General's.

"He talks to a djinn, a ghost," said the Mohammedans. "Every week a djinn comes to him to anoint him with a magic oil. That's why he is proof against bullets and sword cuts."

"He sacrifices to Ganesha, the elephant-god," said the Hindoos. "Haven't you noticed that the elephants are afraid of him? They shrink back when he comes, and they trumpet with fear."

Even to his white soldiers the General was uncanny. They jeered at his clumsy manners, his avarice, his lack of knowledge and education—for he had not even now learned how to write or read, the carpenter from Strasbourg. But they were afraid of him, for no one knew what might happen when he got one of his fits of rage; no one was safe then, not even his highest officers.

Slowly the oil-lamp in his tent burned down. It was almost two o'clock in the morning when at last the curtains were thrown aside. But instead of the girl a soldier rushed in, breathless, wet with perspiration. It was one of the spies he had sent out, days overdue.

"The English army is on its way—they'll be here in two hours——"

Reinhardt got up.

"Where is the Nawab of Oudh? In his palace?"

"No, sir, he is gone. I came here as he left the town."

"How many troops has he taken?"

"Two hundred only."

"Women? Luggage?"

"No, sir."

So he wasn't fleeing, thought Reinhardt; he was riding to the English. It was time for action—very much so.

VI

At the palace of Oudh everybody slept. In a room in the left wing sat Mir Kasim, once Nawab of Bengal, Orissa, and Bihar; now a wretched prisoner. His gaoler had ridden to the enemy and was going to deliver him to them. He knew it—he had seen the Nawab leave with his officers through the south gate.

Yonder, in the English camp, he thought, they will bargain for Mir Kasim's head. This was the end: Bengal, Orissa, and Bihar, only a step to real power, to the golden throne of the Moguls, and that man Samru, that sword become flesh, would have been the right man to prepare the way.

Now the dream had come to its end. The English would never forgive Patna. Not him, and not Samru. Patna, the hundred and fifty prisoners, and Mr Ellis—that meant the rope, thought Mir Kasim, and shivered.

In the *zenana*, the women's rooms in the palace, sat a slim brown girl, her eyes closed so as not to give away her hatred. It was the girl of the little tent, and she had been caught by one of the overseers of the palace. Some one had happened to know that she was 'the Mem-sahib Samru.'

In the *zenana* the wives of the Nawab jeered at her. They had heard enough of Samru, all of them, even the laziest who spent their days just sleeping and dressing and eating sweets.

They had got very proud answers to their sneers, much too proud for their dignity as the wives of the all-powerful Nawab of Oudh.

"You ought to be more modest, O Zeb-un-Nissa (Ornament of the Sex)," mocked the first wife. "After all, you are only the wife of a little general, who is not even a real general—to put it plainly, you are not even the

wife of a man who is not even a general—of a *feringhee* who will soon hang on the end of a rope. And what were you before that? A nautch-girl, they say. A dancer in the temple. Be modest!”

“Samru has got more power than you all have,” replied the girl from the little tent. “When others fall he will rise. I know it. And Ram Bhatgar has said it, the wise one. You, the wife of a man who has betrayed his friend, you call me Zeb-un-Nissa jeeringly. But I tell you I shall one day *have* that name because the Great Mogul will have given it to me as a present of his grace—and that day he will learn somewhat of you all.”

They had very nearly killed her, but since she belonged to Samru it might be important to keep her alive.

“The Nawab will pronounce judgment on you tomorrow when he has returned,” said the first wife.

The girl from the little tent sat and waited. She knew Samru; he must know now that something had happened to her. And he loved her. . . .

Samru came before morning. His men climbed over the walls of the palace like cats; they butchered the overseers before they could give alarm; they threw the guards head first down into the courtyard. In a quarter of an hour Samru was the master of the palace, and the attack had been so sudden and made with so little noise that the Nawab’s troops in their barracks near the palace had heard nothing.

“Where is Mir Kasim?” snapped Reinhardt.

The head overseer showed him a door. The two guards had been killed five minutes ago, but the door was still locked.

“The keys!” And Reinhardt shouted, “It’s me, Mir—Samru!”

For the Mir might believe that the English had come, and he had poison with him in a ring.

The key could not be found, so Reinhardt ordered the door to be smashed in. Then he rushed in and embraced his master.

"You are free, Mir. We march at once."

"Have you come to an understanding with the English?" stammered the Mir, dumbfounded.

Samru laughed.

"The English don't know anything about it—nor does the Nawab of Oudh."

Then he seized hold of the head overseer again and asked him for the girl from the little tent.

"In the *zenana*," wailed the man. "But, *sahib*—you can't——"

But Samru could. The monstrous happening occurred. At the head of a detachment he rushed into those rooms where never a man had entered before, the Nawab of Oudh excepted.

There were yells and screams of fear as the inmates of the *zenana* fled in every direction. But they could not escape, for everywhere stood Samru's soldiers, grinning broadly.

"Help yourselves!" said Reinhardt.

The girl from the little tent walked quietly over to him without so much as a look for her late torturers. Retribution waited for them, for the soldiers seized them and hurried them down into the court.

"Stop their yelling," commanded Reinhardt. "And let's get out of here."

Gentil, Madee, and Polier were waiting for him with the rest of the troops, all ready to march, and half an hour later Reinhardt's men—one brigade of them in all—were marching north with fourteen guns, with Mir Kasim, with the most beautiful women of the *zenana*, and with all the treasures they had looted in the palace. That was Samru's answer to the treachery of the Nawab of Oudh.

The Nawab's troops knew nothing of their master's intentions, so did not try to stop Reinhardt, but when the ruler of Oudh came back he knew at once that now everything was lost for him too. The English would never believe that Samru had escaped without his knowledge. They had received him rather coolly anyhow, and now they would declare the escape a breach of contract and take him prisoner.

He collected as much of his treasure as was left after the looting of Reinhardt's men and fled, and when on that same day the English marched into Oudh they found the nest was empty.

Samru went to Rohilkhand—outside the sphere of British power—and there Mir Kasim left him. He hoped to make use of his old connexions in Delhi and to get back possession of his lost provinces again. But he did not succeed: the Great Mogul did not even receive him. He was interested only in his harem—Suraj-ud-Dowlah's once well-stocked harem was nothing in comparison with that of the Great Mogul's, the Ruler of all Rulers.

Mir Kasim died, as poor as a beggar, and probably by his own hand.

VII

Reinhardt had learned two things: that it was impossible to fight the English with Indian troops, and that he must keep his men together if he wished to retain his power. A man with a crack brigade behind him could win safety and, more important still, wealth.

From then on he avoided any fighting with the English. So many of those Indian *satraps* had their private hostilities and wars where he could be useful and so rise to power. Hafis Rahmat Khan was the first to take him into his service; then the Rajah of Bharatpore, but when

this ambitious man tried to fight the Vizier of the Great Mogul the Reinhardt brigade changed sides.

So Mirza Najaf Khan, Vizier of Shah Alum, became in 1775 Walther Reinhardt's last master, and then all, even his wildest dreams came true. The Vizier presented him with the principality of Sardhana and a personal income of sixty-five thousand rupees per month. The carpenter from Strasbourg had become an Indian prince.

Sardhana was not very big according to Indian scale, but it was big enough for Reinhardt. The newly created Rajah took up his residence in Agra, and his Ranee was the girl from the little tent. He had married her, had even achieved the title 'Begum' for her. Old Ram Bhatgar, the wise one, had been right. "When others fall he will rise," he had said.

Three years after his fairy promotion the Prince of Sardhana, the Rajah from Strasbourg, died from pneumonia, and the Begum ruled now in his stead. All sorts of European adventurers, Italians, French, Spaniards, came to her court, and whoever was good to look at had his chance with the Begum of Sardhana. The history of her rule is a novel in itself—the novel of an Indian Catherine the Great.

In 1792 she married for the second time—a Frenchman, who died later on under rather strange circumstances, probably by poison. The Begum had one son from her marriage with Reinhardt, Zafaryab Khan, whom she long survived. She survived the time of Napoleon the First. Her troops fought for the Moguls in many battles, and for that aid she was given the title for which she had once longed—'Zeb-un-Nissa,' Ornament of the Sex—the name she had been jeeringly called in the *zenana* of the Nawab of Oudh. Later she became a pious Roman Catholic, building churches and giving donations for religious purposes, and she died in 1836, more than ninety years old.

As for Reinhardt himself, I searched the old Roman Catholic cemetery in Agra until I found his tomb. It was a little pavilion of white marble, and on the tomb itself is written in Portuguese:

AQUI JAZO WALTHER REINHARDT

MORREO AOS 4 DE MAY NO

ANNO DE 1778

There is no mention of any of his titles, no mention of his merits, no friendly word. It looks to me as though he himself had wanted it thus, for he had ever hated luxury in his personal life. His enemies alleged that this was because of his avarice, and he most certainly was avaricious. He was ill-tempered, violent, a man who shrank from nothing; yet he had his good qualities too; he was an excellent soldier, and he had a sense of gratitude.

There he lies in his last little marble fortress in the cemetery at Agra, the Rajah from Strasbourg. Little green lizards, butterflies, and grey squirrels are the only living beings around him, except for that old Roman Catholic Indian who occasionally opens a new tomb for some worthy brown citizen of Agra. . . .

After the death of the old Begum the actual principality of Sardhana came into the possession of the East India Company, but the sum of a hundred million rupees went to the heirs—the descendants of Reinhardt's son, Zafaryab Khan.

Only very much later Reinhardt's relatives in Germany heard of his fate and tried to assert their rights, but they lacked the money for a lawsuit, and, as far as I know, there are difficulties in the way of legally proving their relationship. They did, at any rate, lay memoranda before the Viceroy of India, the Governor of Bengal, the German Consulates.

There came a strange postscript to this strange story: I had just finished studying the documents at the German Consulate-General in Calcutta when the Vice-Consul came in.

"Here's a strange coincidence," he said. "There you are, digging up that ages-old matter, and we have just received this letter. Have a look at it."

It was a letter from the Governor of Bengal, dated the 24th of October, 1934, and it declared that there are no heirs left alive of Walther Reinhardt, *alias* Samru.

INDIA AND CEYLON

Crocodile-shooting—Calcutta—A letter in Tibetan—Ceylon—
Journey to a tea estate in a drunken car—Cobra v Tik-palonga.

GOOD hunting," said the manager of the hotel, and it seemed to me he was grinning a little. I thanked him curtly, and threw the rifle enterprisingly over my shoulder.

Outside a little car was waiting, and next to the driver sat a *shikari* who was to blame for the whole idea. He had appeared on the terrace just after dinner and had told me of a place one hour's drive from Delhi where the crocodiles had to lie out in tiers two deep because there were so many of them. The dinner had been very good; I was in gracious mood, and so had said that I would come out and have a look—so there we were.

We left Delhi behind us.

"That's New Delhi over there, *sahib*," said the *shikari*. We drove on past giant buildings, palaces, embassies, Government offices; along an endless road, flanked by huge bungalows built in every variety of style.

"*Rajas*," said the *shikari*. Nearly all the Indian princes had had bungalows built here—near the new residence of the Viceroy.

We swung to the left.

"Where are we going, *shikari*?"

"To Ocla, *sahib*."

I was rather pleased with the idea of my first hunt, and crocodiles seemed to be quite a worthy start. All my friends had begun on roebuck or foxes or something equally defenceless, and I felt it was much more sporting

to make one's hunting *début* on crocodiles who could at least hit back or bite back, or at any rate put up some sort of retaliatory fight. The only question was how to shoot my crocodile. The hotel manager, to whom the rifle belonged, said in the neck; the *shikari* said right into the mouth; my own opinion was in the eye—if possible. I decided to act as the best strategic situation seemed to suggest when the time came.

Our surroundings began to look very much like jungle, and the road became rather bad.

"Ocla, *sahib*," said the *shikari*.

We got out of the car and walked through high grass. I saw a river in some distance. I had five cartridges in my rifle and another thirty in my pocket. "That ought to be enough for an army of crocodiles," I thought.

A tree shrieked suddenly, a thick tree with luxuriant foliage and a wide spread. It shrieked discordantly. Then a little green and red cloud got up and sailed through the air until it came down on the top of another tree: parrots. With their green bodies and red tails they looked like the pre-War soldiers of a Ruritania state.

The *shikari* smiled at my enthusiasm: he was used to parrots. The fact also that we met no less than thirty-seven grey-white squirrels did not impress him either.

Only once he jumped aside and shouted a warning. Something was slithering across the path, something longish, greyish.

"*Karait!*" said the *shikari*, and I saw that his lips had paled. After that I looked carefully before I put my feet down.

We approached the river, and the *shikari* put a swarthy finger to his lips. We walked on tiptoe, till suddenly he stopped. I looked over his shoulder and saw an amazing sight—no crocodiles, but what surprised me even more. At first glance it looked as though a Roman legion must

have been defeated there, and that the soldiers must have thrown away their shields. But no man in the world could have lifted one of these shields single-handed: twenty-five, thirty stone they must have weighed.

They were giant tortoises, grey-brown, copper-coloured, black, having their midday rest in the sun. Had they got wind of us? Heard us? Seen us? Suddenly a few started moving, the others followed at once, and with heavy, clumsy movements the whole tortoise army clashed into the water. The river spurted up some hundreds of times; then the shore was empty.

No crocodiles; and there would not be a hope of any within the next half hour after this. We marched on through the jungle for a distance of some hundred yards from the river towards where it seemed there was a sort of pond. The ground under our feet was swampy.

I saw a tree, a fallen tree, lying across our path. But when I came nearer I saw that the tree had a head, and that it was looking at me.

I stopped. I had seen crocodiles before—in the zoos of Berlin and Cairo—but this beast here was quite different, I do not quite know why. It was perhaps ten feet long, greyish-brown, and quite loathsome.

I remember very well that I said rather loudly, "You swine, you ugly swine!"

The crocodile, of course, did not take any notice of my criticism, but just went on staring at me from a distance of something like fifteen yards. It had the coldest, meanest, most soulless stare I have ever seen. It did not seem to be frightened at all, which upset all my preconceived ideas about wild beasts looking away if a man stared at them.

I stared back. Soulless—yes, soulless was the word for that cold look; not cruel, which in a way implies some kind of intention. Here was no intention; here

was absolute indifference—soullessness. Dogs may have souls, horses—elephants too, the Wonderful Ones—but this beast had no soul. It was wicked, evil, fiendish. It was stronger than I was. I looked away.

There was a rustling noise, and I looked back—just in time to see the brute's tail disappearing into the bushes. Then and *only* then I became aware of the *shikari's* hissing, "*Sahib—sahib—why not shoot, sahib?*" and I knew suddenly that he had been hissing that for quite a while.

I looked at him, then at my rifle. There was death in my rifle; those eyes would have ceased to stare; I had come into the jungle for just that. I had forgotten to shoot.

I ran to the pond. There far away was a grey streak. Then it was gone. We hunted for another one for more than two hours, but we found nothing.

I have often wondered why I did not shoot. It was not that I was afraid. I was not. The idea of shooting simply never entered my head.

I wonder if that beast had—hypnotized me?

II

On the voyage out, at Aden to be precise, a man on board had said to me, "When you come to Calcutta send me a wire, and I'll meet your train and show you round. Just send me a wire."

I took him at his word and wired from Delhi, and when I got to Calcutta there he was on Howrah platform. We went out to his car and drove over a bridge packed tight with cars and vehicles of all kinds. I thought of Stamboul, the Galata bridge, the Golden Horn; but they have no rickshaws in Stamboul, and the blue waters of the Sea of Marmora are rather ill replaced by the yellowish waves of the Hooghly, that treacherous river with its

shifting sands, whose pilots are the best paid in the world. After the Old Howrah Bridge, the city itself, daubed everywhere with the eternal brown-red stains of the *pân* juice spat out by the natives on pavement and on wall alike.

We braked, and the car slewed violently to avoid running down a sacred bull whose placid white head poked up against our windscreen. The Englishman who had come to meet me cursed like an Irish rating.

"The damn' things know they're holy. They never give way to a car," he said.

"What would happen if you ran over one?"

"Oh, I don't know—depends. Sometimes the Hindus laugh; sometimes they try and kill a chap for it. We have thousands of cases where a cow starts rows and riots. They roam loose all over the place. Say one of them noses into a vegetable shop—she'll empty his baskets pretty quickly. If the man's a Hindu he'll bow and be happy that her Sacred Highness has filled her belly with his vegetables. Besides, he thinks it will bring him luck. But if the man's a Mohammedan he'll take a stick and give the Holy One a sound thrashing, and that, of course, makes the Hindus round see red, and they give *him* a thrashing. He shouts for help, other Mohammedans arrive, and there you are."

We stopped at the Great Eastern Hotel.

"Come round later and have lunch with us," said the Englishman with a friendly nod as he drove off.

I booked my room, had a bath, especially welcome after the long train journey, and at one o'clock I had lunch with my English friend and his charming wife. At five we all had tea at his club. These English clubs are the same all over the world: ice-cold drinks, tea, terrible little cakes and buns; how do you do, how do you do; cheerful but utterly meaningless chit-chat. Almost every

person one meets has got personality and has had an interesting life, but they all seem to do their utmost to hide it. They seem to feel that it is a far, far better thing to bore oneself and every one else rather than risk being thought conceited or lacking in reserve.

On our drive back to the town the Englishman raised his hand to point out an interesting building, and I saw that he had a revolver in the inside pocket of his coat.

"Do you always carry a gun?"

"We all do—in the service. It's an order. And I think, in a way, I am the reason of it."

"How so?"

"Ever heard of the murder of Colonel Simpson?"

"The police chief who was killed in his office in Calcutta?"

"That's right. It was an act of revenge. I was working under him at the time. Heard the shooting. Had no gun myself. The fellows came along the corridor, and I threw my chair at them to stop them. They shot me through the shoulder and bunked, but that little delay was good enough for our men downstairs. They fixed the fellows all right—got hanged afterwards, though that didn't help poor Simpson much, I'm afraid. Since then we all carry guns."

Dinner we had in Chinatown. There are thousands of Chinese in Calcutta, and my Englishman seemed to be well known among them; he was greeted from all sides, and always greeted back, "Good evening, John."

We turned into a little shop.

"Show your things, John. But we don't want to buy anything—only looky-see."

The little Chinaman grinned politely, displayed ivory carvings, bronzes, porcelain.

"I bought a fine carpet here yesterday," whispered the

Englishman. "Bargained for hours, of course. Got it very cheap in the end."

"John" produced a pretty china vase and gave it as a gift to the Englishman, who thanked him very politely, but seemed a little disconcerted, and I noticed that he was rather silent on our way home.

Saying good night, I thanked him for a wonderful day.

"That's all right," he grunted. "Enjoyed it myself—only I can't get over that present of John's——"

"Well, it was rather nice of him, wasn't it?"

"My dear chap, you're a novice. A Chinaman giving a present! No, it's a proof that he did me down over that confounded carpet yesterday! . . . Good night."

III

In the very heart of Calcutta, almost opposite the Maidan, stands the building of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal. I had an appointment there with, many people assured me, the most interesting man in Calcutta.

My first impression was of books, books, tens of thousands of books. Young Indians were working at separate broad tables, and each of them had a fine brain. In the distance, bent over a fair-sized mountain of books, was a European. That was 'the Professor,' Chairman of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, a Dutchman, Commander of the Légion d'Honneur, former Vice-president of the German Club, a man who had mastered a dozen languages, including several Chinese dialects and Tibetan. He had lived in Calcutta for thirty years, and if ever there was a man, a European, who knew India, then it was the 'Professor of Bengal.'

He received me very kindly and took me to his private study, a little room, four-fifths of it filled by a giant desk. I sat down under the inevitable fan, and the Pro-

fessor disappeared—disappeared entirely behind the Himalaya of books on his desk.

So I started a conversation with an invisible man.

"Tell me, Professor, how much do you think is true about all that mystic stuff in India they talk so much about?"

"As much as you can put on my fingernail, my friend."

"I have been told that life in India changes most people's characters——"

"Not most people's—everybody's. Even those who have no character at all. I happen to know a man who has been a painter, dragoman, steward, and all sorts of other things, always a failure, always getting himself into trouble—one of those fellows one can twist round one's finger. You know the sort—the last man he was with was always right. After six months in India he became a Buddhist monk, and now he is living somewhere near the Tibetan frontier—in the mountains."

"And how long has he lived like this?"

"Oh—the last fifteen years anyhow. . . .—India does change people. If a man comes here without patience he will learn it. If he comes with patience he will lose it."

During this conversation half a dozen visitors had come in one by one, bowed to the giant desk and greeted the invisible Professor, who had replied to each in his own tongue. They were, as he told me, a Chinese professor of phonetics from Canton, an Indian scientist from the Deccan, a Mohammedan, a Tibetan doctor of pharmacology, born in Lhasa, and a Hindu from Kashmir, who had studied physics at the Sorbonne.

I was growing tired of talking to a bodyless ghost, so I made a flank attack round the desk, and saw that he had been going on with his work while talking to me.

"Cæsar," I said politely, "Cæsar, of course, would have managed to dictate a letter at the same time." And I got up.

The Professor laughed.

"I have to go on working," he said. "But please don't go yet."

He picked up a green lizard crawling along between two folios and put it carefully on the wall. It climbed the wall at once and walked along the ceiling.

"Is there no such thing as gravity for that little beast?" I asked. "What is it—a yogi in disguise?"

The Professor laughed.

"There you can see how easily one gets bluffed, my dear fellow. These little chaps have suctional organs on their paws—that's all. Somehow most of the miracles in India have solutions like that."

He went on writing, wild characters of a kind I had never seen before.

"What sort of language is that?"

"Tibetan. I'm writing to a very dear friend of mine. He'll get the letter in three months' time—if he gets it at all. He is living near Lhasa. The letter will go by rail to Nepal, and then things get a little less simple. Camel caravans are not the safest things in the world, you know. This man's a wonderful fellow. He buys rare Tibetan scripts for me. I once sent him three thousand rupees for that—had to use quite a few camels for it, too."

"Why?"

"I had to send them in eight-anna pieces. Bigger coins are regarded with deep suspicion up there. The money would have made him a Rockefeller, but he is as honest as *Cincinnatus*."

"An honest Tibetan——"

"Why not?"

"You're right—why not? I think Asiatics are capable of anything—even that. Except being logical—that they are not."

The Professor laughed.

"That's funny," he said. "Some days ago I had an old Indian friend of mine here and he complained bitterly of the illogical English. An Englishman had invited him to his home, and my friend saw him mixing a drink. He put gin in it, to make it stronger; and then water, to make it weaker; lemon, to make it sourer; and sugar, to make it sweeter. Then he said, 'Here is to you, my friend'—and drank it himself!"

IV

When I left Calcutta I was disappointed to find there was no ship for Ceylon for days, so I had to go by the rail: three days and four nights in a narrow compartment, alone or with one other traveller. And I was not feeling well even before the journey started. I had a bad headache, usually a thing I never get. But in India all sorts of things crop up: one gets swollen feet and thinks with horror of elephantiasis; one gets prickly heat, a neat reminder of the extraordinary number of perspiratory glands in the body. They get inflamed and itch like—well, they itch badly. And if one is not careful one gets malaria.

In my compartment in the train a long, emaciated *sahib* was making up his bed. He nodded curtly when I came in, and I too started the fight with pillows, rugs, and mattress. After a while we got into conversation with each other: he was from Darjeeling.

"Ever been in Tibet?" I asked.

"Oh, no. One can't get in, you know."

"Why? Won't the Tibetans let anyone in?"

"Oh, yes—provided you have a permit from the British Government in India."

"And one can't get that?"

"Oh, yes, you get it all right—provided that you can show them the Tibetan *visa*!"

"The famous snake swallowing its own tail!"

"That's right. Actually, I think, neither the British nor the Tibetans are specially keen on you or me or anyone else going to Tibet."

"For political reasons?"

"Dunno. But I don't think the Tibetans like strangers—live strangers, anyhow. And the British don't like difficulties with your relations after your death."

"I see. Sounds sensible."

"Strange fellows, the Tibetans, anyhow. I know quite a lot of them. When one of them dies they break every bone in his body."

"That *is* strange," I admitted. "As a rule it's the other way round—if one breaks every bone in some one's body, he'll die."

"The Tibetans," explained the emaciated *sahib*, "always have some special stunt. In this case it is a preventive measure—they are trying to prevent the spirit of the dead from coming back to the place where he used to live. They don't like that—it frightens them, you know. So they break his bones, and the spirit can't walk."

"Very clever indeed," I said.

"Ah, here's a station. Going to have dinner?"

"N-no, thanks. I'm not very hungry."

He nodded and disappeared, and I was left alone. I simply could not face the idea of the inevitable dining-car menu in India: cold consommé, fish without vegetables, mutton chops with vegetables, curry and rice, cheese and fruit. There would be plenty of opportunity for that the next day or the day after. I was not hungry, and wondered if the emaciated *sahib* had spoiled my appetite with his stories of Tibetan corpses. But I can stand much more than that: I realized it must be the pain in my head, that I must have gone down with fever.

I remember the tapping of naked feet; the shouting of

porters; a dark face looking into my carriage for a moment with gleaming eyes like the eyes of a beast of prey. Then the shot of a heavy gun making the whole compartment echo: some one had slammed the door. The train began to move, and I remember saying, "My head, my poor head—I can't stand this long."

I do not remember much about the next thirty-six hours, but I do remember that the emaciated *sahib* re-appeared and went on talking of Tibet, and that he asked several times, "I hope I'm not boring you, am I?"

The only other thing I can remember him saying was, "Did you ever notice before that India is a face? The Himalayas are the bushy eyebrows, and the face is putting out its tongue to Ceylon."

The next morning when I woke up he was gone, and I am still not quite sure if he ever really existed at all.

Grey land, green land, brown land; palm-trees; rice fields; swamps; stations where shouting, yelling natives sell oranges and bananas. Once a leper stretched his hand into my compartment, the rudiments of a hand with three fingers swollen like sausages.

It was hot, terribly hot, and a thousand small hammers were hitting at me all the time.

At Madras I pulled myself together and got out of the train to go and find a doctor. I took a taxi to drive through the town in the most terrible heat I had ever felt. Calcutta was a cool drink, Bombay sheer ice against this. I thought, what if the doctor said I must stay here for a week, or even longer? That clinched it—no doctor for me in this place of Hindu temples and lepers. There are twenty-five thousand lepers in Madras, and nobody looks after them.

I hurried back to the train, and this time I did not even trouble to make up my bed. The night was terrible, full of grotesque dreams. The relief figures in the temples

became living beings, six-armed demons, imps with elephantine legs, leprous spirits.

At last the morning came, and suddenly the train moved into the sea, right into the sea, so that I seriously believed that I had lost my mind. But it was true—we were running on a knife-sharp embankment, to the right of us the Indian Ocean and to the left of us the Indian Ocean. Half an hour later we stopped on a little quay, where a boat was waiting for us.

At four o'clock we sailed, and India's southern point, the tongue, disappeared. Then came the coast of Ceylon, long and flat: another quay; another train.

I felt that this journey would never end at all. The train went slowly, and from thousands of ponds came the croaking of hundreds of thousands of frogs; cicadas singing their night-songs; all the jungle was singing around the slowly moving train. I slept dreamlessly; woke up at sunrise, my headache gone, my fever quite burned out. . . .

There were small railway stations in Ceylon; and men in long womanish dresses with big combs in their hair: Cingalese.

At Colombo Fort I took a taxi to the Galle Face Hotel. On the way I bought a newspaper, the *Times of Ceylon*. Its headlines said, "Australia Flyers make London-Sydney in Three Days." While I had been speeding through South India they had taken off in London. And long before I had reached Colombo they had been in Australia.

I remember Armistice Day in Kandy. In the morning the two minutes' silence had been especially impressive with huge elephants standing motionless among the crowd of Cingalese and Tamils.

In the evening all the officers came to dance and drink at the Queen's Hotel. I sat in the hall, smoking my pipe "Cairo"—"London" and "Saint Christopher" were in my room with the three cigar-cases "Augustus," "Marmaduke," and "Svengali."

The white coats and black trousers of the Ceylon Light Infantry and the multicoloured dresses of the women made a charming picture. Crowding the bar were literally hundreds of planters in ordinary dinner jackets. The majority shareholders of the big whisky distilleries would have been heartened to see their prodigious capacity.

At eleven o'clock some friends of mine arrived—we had played bridge together the day before—and I was introduced to half a dozen people, and each introduction was combined with two drinks, the one I had with them and the one they had with me. This was definitely no country club tea: there was talk in plenty here, and all the scandals, scandalettos, and scandalettinos of five hundred miles round Kandy were most thoroughly sifted and resifted.

They were laughing about Varada Sinha, the descendant of the last Cingalese king, who was living somewhere in South India, and seemed to be rather badly off.

"He has sent a petition to the Government," said an old planter. "Wants to have a pension of five hundred rupees a month and a bungalow."

"Well?" I said quietly.

"But, my dear fellow, I ask you—I don't think they've even answered him."

Now there are few things I respect so much as fallen grandeur. I don't know Varada Sinha—he may be just a fat Cingalee like a thousand others—but his ancestors had ruled Ceylon, and I felt angry listening to that old planter.

"Why ever not?" I said slowly. "Don't you think one

ought to grant that to the poor fellow—after having taken all Ceylon?”

The old planter shrugged his shoulders.

“Incidentally,” I went on, “he is not a very clever man. If I were in his position I should ask for five thousand rupees a month and a palace instead of a bungalow—and, what’s more, I should get it.”

“I wonder how you’d manage that?” said the planter, and laughed.

“I should get in touch with an American impresario,” I said. “That would not be very difficult, would it? I’d make a contract with that man for a tour through all the biggest towns in the United States. The descendant of the last Cingalese king would go on the stage, and whether he had a voice or not he would sing. Sing a song for sixpence of the sad fate of a man who would be king of Ceylon but for the English—and whom the English were allowing to starve. . . . I would have the impresario sign that contract; then I would show it to the Government, loyal subject as I am, and would give the Government the opportunity to do business with me first by paying me a monthly pension of five thousand rupees—for which amount I would sing or not, just as the Government prefers. What do you think the Government would do?”

There was silence. Then the old planter said, “Pay, I’m afraid. Well, I am glad that you are not descended from the old kings of this island, Mr de Wohl.”

We all laughed then: they had enough sense of humour to take my little attack in good part, and we went on drinking and telling stories, till at one o’clock in the morning another planter said, “We must go home now. Look here, Mr de Wohl, be a sport and come back and stay with us over the week-end.” His wife smiled her support to the invitation.

I was a bit flabbergasted.

"Now—in the middle of the night?"

"Of course. Why not?"

"Er—all right. I'll be ready in ten minutes. And thanks awfully."

I went up to my room, packed a few things, and came down again. A Rolls was waiting, with the planter and wife already inside. "Hallo. Here we are. Got a rug?"

"A rug? No. But why? I'm not cold."

"Not yet. Wait and see. Anyhow I've got this to keep us warm."

He showed me a full bottle of whisky, and I was not sorry that a Tamil boy was at the wheel instead of the owner of the car. They wrapped me in their rugs like an orange on the way to Greenland. I wondered what they meant with their "Wait and see." The nights in Ceylon were quite as warm as a sunny day in Naples.

The Rolls moved off, and we three, wrapped up like oranges, began to sing. I had taken but a very moderate share in all the drinking around me, but even so the whiskies must have mounted to eleven or twelve—enough to encourage song, in any case.

There was jungle to right and jungle to left; sometimes something slipped flashlike across the path, a little antelope perhaps, or maybe something else—I could not see very clearly. I might be a little tipsy, I thought, but the jungle was just plain drunk. The palm-trees, even the worthy elderly ones, were dancing quite disgracefully. I felt obliged to point this out to my hostess, but she shook her head and said it was not the palm-trees—it was the car.

I saw then that she was right: the Rolls was drunk. They must have filled the tank with whisky. I thought it was carrying things rather too far to have to be driven through the jungle in a drunken Rolls, and said so. My

hostess agreed with me and passed my remark on to her husband. He nodded gravely.

"Quite right, old boy, quite right. We must get our equilibrium back."

He took the bottle and poured a couple of drinks, but even that did not help the Rolls. We were reeling through a forest of dancing giant trees and giant grass.

"The Rolls is lopsided," I said angrily. "Entirely lopsided."

"That's all right," my hostess reassured. "The road's going uphill, you see. That's why."

"When do we get there?"

"What time is it now?"

"Two o'clock, I *think*," I said thoughtfully. "My watch is a bit topsy-turvy too, I'm afraid."

"Then we shall be at home at four——"

A quick calculation showed me that the distance from Kandy to the tea estate to which we were driving must be almost as far as from London to Paris.

We tore on through jungle and more jungle; and always upwards. The rugs were very welcome, for it was cold, really cold, for we were in the mountains. Stars were loitering in the sky, and the moon was lopsided too, definitely. The whole universe was drunk that night; the whisky bottle was empty; and I was very tired. . . .

When I woke up the Rolls was entering a broad drive; then it stopped in front of a huge bungalow. Three native servants got us out of our rugs.

"Good night; good night."

I was in a room; there was a wide bed with a mosquito net. I remembered that I was quite bewildered to find the whisky bottle we had just emptied now full again and standing on the little table beside my bed: I could not make that out.

I do not remember anything more after that.

It is a queer feeling to wake up in the morning and not to know in what part of the world one is. It took me a little time the next day to realize that I was on a tea estate in the middle of Ceylon and that it was half-past nine and a perfectly glorious morning. I hurried to get up.

When I went into the drawing-room my host and hostess stared in amazement. I bowed politely and said good morning.

• "But of course—you're Mr—Mr—I have forgotten your name."

Then my hostess laughed. "We invited you yesterday anyhow—"

"I had forgotten all about it too when I woke up," I said, and introduced myself solemnly. Then we had breakfast.

The estate belonged to the Lipton firm of tea merchants, and my host was the manager. The nearest bungalow belonged to his assistant, and it took half an hour to walk there. When they exchanged visits after sunset they had to carry a rifle with them because of the leopards.

"Have you so many leopards here?"

"Quite a lot, thanks." My host glanced at the five skins in the drawing-room.

"My wife shot two of those; the others are mine."

Up there in the mountains the climate was quite wonderful, with none of the damp heat of Colombo, let alone the murderous blaze of Madras. The vegetation had not, of course, the tropical luxuriance of the plains, but there were acacias to remind me of Africa, and blue mountains everywhere. It was beautiful.

My host was a very energetic man. I had been told that one must be short and peremptory with native servants, but he seemed to be almost rough sometimes.

"There is a difference between a tea estate and a hotel

in Kandy or Colombo, you know. We've got to be a bit harder. When we take a step backwards the native takes one forwards."

"Do you ever have cases of insubordination?"

"Rarely. But when it happens one's got to do something. I had a boy last year who got insolent. I slapped his face——"

"Are you allowed to hit a native?"

"I'm not. He brought a lawsuit against me, and I was fined two rupees. I paid, we left the court, and in the corridor I gave the boy two slaps in the face, one on each cheek. He went straight back into the courtroom, and I followed him. I was fined twenty-five rupees, and when we came out I gave him a good hiding. He's never been insolent again."

I shook my head.

"It was the best thing to do, believe me," said my host quietly.

From the terrace of the bungalow I could see the natives working in the fields. The white turbans of the men, the red and yellow saris of the women, looked like big exotic flowers from where I sat. They looked so peaceful, and I thought what a pity it was that one must be hard with those slim, beautiful creatures, and I wondered if it was really necessary.

When I went back into the drawing-room my hostess was at the telephone. She was pale and excited. She did not speak, just listened. Then, after quite a while, she said a few comforting words and put down the receiver.

"It was a friend of ours," she said. "She lives on the next estate—two hours from here by car. She's terribly upset. Her little girl—two years old—has been asleep for eighteen hours. The doctor has just been, and he found out that the child had been poisoned—with opium. They

had an inquiry at once, and the *ayah* confessed that she gave the baby opium to make it stop crying."

My host nodded and glanced at me.

"They are rather fond of poison," he said coolly. "Know quite a lot about it, too. Affairs of jealousy are often settled that way."

"In India they use tiger-hairs for that. Cut them into tiny pieces and mix them with the food. The hair's indigestible, and causes terrible inflammation and death after weeks of torture."

"Here in Ceylon they use powdered glass," said my host grimly. "That's indigestible too—destroys the walls of the stomach."

The next morning I said good-bye to my hosts. The Rolls was waiting: by eleven o'clock I would be back in Kandy, by the river of that little emerald-green lake. I should see the elephants having their daily bath.

The servants salaamed respectfully, their beautiful dark eyes soft and mild.

VI

Back into civilization in Colombo, back to modern life: sky-scrapers and telephones and sewing-machines and bars, cinemas, hairdressers' saloons, smart shops, and Thomas Cook. There is running water in the hotels, h. and c.; everybody is very polite, and if one finds a harmless little *gecko*, a lizard, in one's room one rings the bell and has the criminal removed by half a dozen smartly uniformed boys.

Done with is the four-inch bird-eating spider of the mountains; the eight-inch scorpion which a week ago one finished off oneself with a rifle butt. Nothing is dangerous here. It cannot happen here that on a peaceful walk one sees a flat head rising out of the grass, and that one must run, run for one's life—for the Tik-palonga,

unlike the cobra, attacks even without being disturbed or trodden on, and its bite means death within twenty minutes. . . .

The Tik-palonga has no friend in all the world, and even between her and the cobra there is war. The cobra is no angel either, but she flees mankind and bites only if she feels herself in danger. The natives have an old legend about the enmity between cobra and Tik-palonga.

Once upon a time the cobra and the Tik-palonga were, if not intimate friends, at any rate more or less good neighbours. In a period of drought a Tik-palonga, almost parched with thirst, met a cobra who seemed to be quite bright and cheerful.

"Oh, yes," said the cobra to the Tik's avid questioning, "I know where water is—and it is not very far either. But I'm not sure that I'm going to tell you the place——"

"Why not? I'm terribly thirsty——"

"I can see that. But there is a friend of mine playing there—a little girl—and you can be so very nasty, Tik."

"I must drink," foamed the Tik-palonga.

"The little girl is a *very* good friend of mine," replied the cobra coolly. "And I don't want her to be hurt, see?"

"Where is the spring?" groaned the Tik-palonga.

The cobra gave her a severe look.

"Swear the great oath of the snake that you won't do any harm to my little friend."

The Tik-palonga swore, and the cobra showed her the way to the spring. The Tik-palonga hurried there. Water, water, at last!

The little girl came, and she mistook the Tik for her friend the cobra and tried to pat its head. But the Tik was still thirsty and did not want to be disturbed. It struck—the little girl shrank back, crying—and the Tik went on drinking and then wriggled back into the jungle.

When the cobra came to the spring the next morning

it found the little girl there, her face distorted and blue—dead. The cobra knew at once who had been the murderer and hissed the call of revenge, the most terrible call of revenge existing: "The great oath of the snake is broken! Hunt the Tik-palonga!" And the next cobra in the jungle heard it, shivering, and passed it on, and so all the cobra people knew what had happened. The murderer was killed the same night by the avenger, but since that time there is bitter enmity between the cobras and the Tik-palongas all over the world. . . .

So goes the tale. But there are neither Tik-palongas nor cobras in Colombo. It is very peaceful here.

VII

I took a boat in the harbour, and an old Cingalee rowed me round to look at the ships. There were hundreds of gigs, dinghies, motor-boats, and launches; a black P. and O. giant flying the Blue Peter before putting out for China. There were low grey ships that looked like destroyers.

The Cingalee grinned.

"Russian warships, sahib."

I remembered having read something about them in the *Times of Ceylon*. They had been built on an Italian wharf for Soviet Russia, and they were on their way to Vladivostock, where they would be armed—they had no guns when I saw them. Next to them was a big ten-thousand tonner, a Japanese with goods on board which will beat the Italian competition in Abyssinia by several hundred lengths; and other goods, amazingly like certain British goods, only not of such good quality and six times cheaper; silk stockings for Tunisia at fourpence the pair, bicycles for the Dutch colonies at six shillings apiece.

There came in then nine ships, all of the same type,

powerful, fast, full of energy, and fully gunned: the British destroyer flotilla D: *Duncan*, *Decoy*, *Delight*, *Dainty*, *Duchess*, *Defender*, *Diamond*, *Diana*, and *Daring*. They were on their way to Singapore. They lay so close to one another: the Russians, not yet armed and with Italian officers on board, the Japanese with her goods for dumping, and the English. They were so close, and polite, and so very, very peaceful. . . .

CHAPTER XII

SETTLING IN ENGLAND

The witch of Bengal—Curing snake-bites by telephone, and the explanation—Dr Sarmananda's prophecy of war—Good-bye to Germany—Impressions of England.

I STOOD astern by the rail until the magic island had disappeared into the sea. It was like saying good-bye to a beautiful and beloved woman.

I felt sad, for the richest time of my life was sinking into the blue sea. I thought how every day was like a separate life by itself, every little happening hiding a deep and profound truth, sometimes tragic, sometimes comic, and sometimes both. That brought back into my mind the case of the witch of Bengal.

To the superintendent of police of a Bengal district came an old Hindu, the headman of a small native village. He carried a parcel with him.

"*Sahib*, you have told me that I must come to you with every important matter. Here I am."

He opened his parcel, and out came the head of an old woman, neatly cut off with a sharp knife. When the superintendent had recovered from the shock he had the old man arrested.

"Where did you get this? Who has done it?"

"I have, *sahib*," said the old man candidly. "I had to do it. She said so herself. She knew that it was necessary—she was a witch, you know. She had the evil eye, so that when she looked on a man he became ill the same day, and some even died. When she looked at a man's cattle the cattle got the plague. We were very patient for a long time, *sahib*, but at last the elders came together,

and most of them wanted her to be killed. I objected, and I had her brought into the temple of Lakshmi, outside the village, thinking that perhaps the goddess could free her from her evil eye. She stayed there for a fortnight, and we brought her food and water every day with our faces turned aside that she might not do us any harm. Neither cattle nor people died in those fourteen days and nobody got ill. Then we brought her back. The first man she looked at, Chandra Lal, got ill the same evening and died two days later, so now we knew that she could not be cured—she said so herself. So I cut her head off, *sahib*. Here it is, and here I am to hand in my report.”

The superintendent had him taken to gaol. The old man was very much surprised, and even more so when they hanged him later on. But it had to be, for otherwise it would have meant the killing of thousands of old women all over the provinces of Bengal, and probably all over India. News in India spreads faster than anywhere else in the world, excepting perhaps in Central Africa, where the negroes have their own system of wiring news by their *lokalis* (drums), whose rhythm is picked up and passed on over thousands of miles.

I thought of how the engine of my train from Delhi to Calcutta broke down, and we had to wait in the middle of the jungle till another engine came to rescue us. It was midday and boiling hot.

I left my compartment and went to the dining-car.

“Who wants to play bridge, gentlemen?”

Everybody laughed, but only two could play bridge, until at last the dining-car attendant confessed that he knew the game—but only auction. So we decided to play auction. But we had no cards, so I drew them on old menu cards which I cut up into the right size. We three passengers won our lunch and dinner from the dining-

car man. Then, strangely enough, the engine recovered from its indisposition, and we were able to proceed. . . .

I thought of another journey—from Calcutta to Madras—on which I smashed my best pair of spectacles by sitting on them. In Madras I tried to buy a new pair.

"*Real tortoiseshell, sahib?*" asked the optician with raised eyebrows.

I nodded, somewhat surprised, whereupon he shrugged his shoulders, opened a strong-box, and produced a pair, no better and no worse than any others.

"How much is that?"

"Sixty rupees, *sahib*. Real tortoiseshell, *sahib*."

I slammed the door behind me. Sixty rupees—in the very country of tortoises! I made up my mind to wait till Berlin, where I could get a pair for half that price. But in Colombo, two days later, I saw so many beautiful tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles in an optician's window that I could not resist again going in to see if perhaps they were cheaper here.

The optician showed me a wonderful pair.

"Seven rupees fifty cents, *sahib*."

"HOW MUCH?" I roared.

He shrank back.

"F-for you—five rupees, *sahib*."

I bought three pairs, and understood for the first time that there is no such thing as logic in economic matters: there seem to be no rules in that game at all. Colombo is situated on the sea, and in the sea are millions of tortoises; Madras is situated on the sea, and in the sea are millions of tortoises. But in Madras a pair of tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles costs sixty rupees, and in Colombo five. It might puzzle even Montagu Norman or Dr Schacht to find the reason.

I thought of Grant Road in Bombay, that terrible street

where the prostitutes sit in cages, and like it, because it protects them against non-paying visitors.

I thought of Karaya Road in Calcutta, that street of disorderly houses. In front of each house stands a gramophone, as old as Methuselah, and it plays and it plays and it plays. To stand half-way down Karaya Road means hearing Satan's own symphony.

I thought too of the almost superhuman performance of that handful of Englishmen who govern that immense and incredible country. I had met half a dozen officers, some of them from the Khyber district. They did not talk much—it is not in the nature of that type of man to talk much—but I heard one or two stories, and I heard more from other people.

In thinking of things like these the foreigner can only take off his hat and bow very, very deeply. As I actually write these lines shots are being fired on the frontier of Waziristan. Afridis, Waziris, and Mahsuds are hiding in the rocks and sniping whenever they see an inch of a uniform. And British soldiers are protecting the rich land round Peshawar with their lives.

I am firmly convinced that if to-day the English were suddenly to leave India *en masse* many of those ardent Indian nationalists would take the next boat too. They cannot afford to live in a country where no Union Jack protects their possessions *and their lives*. And a few months after the departure of the last British soldier there would be civil war. And a few months after the civil war—or perhaps even earlier—there would be the Russian, Italian, or Japanese invasion, or—if the Indians are lucky—all three: Bombay as an Italian fortress; Calcutta as a Japanese naval base; and Delhi as the capital of the North Indian Soviet Republic—a pretty picture for distribution among Indian nationalists.

There may be inconveniences to things as they are, but

every land, even the richest one, has its distressed areas. And it is only natural that distress is more visible in the tropics than, let us say, in France or England. Everything is strongly marked in the tropics. And neither in Paris nor in London will it happen that a policeman, jumping into the water in full uniform to save a man trying to commit suicide, will be attacked and almost lynched by infuriated people, as happened, and still may happen, in Benares, where it counts for a religious merit to commit suicide in the holy waters of the Ganges. . . .

I thought of the little English priest who told me about the strange man who healed snake-bites by telephone.

"As true as I try to be a faithful servant of the Church, so true is the following story," he said. "The man is an official at a little station of the South Indian Railway. From everywhere in the country they 'phone to him if some one has been bitten by a poisonous snake. They carry the wretched man to the 'phone and press the receiver to his ear. The railway man says some sort of incantations and prayers, the bitten man falls asleep, and wakes up twelve or fifteen hours later—cured."

When I was back in Berlin I asked my doctor what he thought of that story. He thought it over for a while. Then he said quietly, "Well, that may be so."

I nearly fell off my chair.

"What? You as a qualified doctor can believe such a thing?"

He smiled.

"I have studied medicine, but I should never dare to say that our European medicine knows everything. I know *our* limits: they need not necessarily be the limits of others. And don't forget, I was in East Africa for years. One gets off one's high horse pretty quickly there."

"But you have no medical explanation for my story, have you?"

"Oh, yes," he said, to my amazement. "Why not?"

"What is it, then?"

"Do you know how snake poison takes effect? Well, it's like this: the poison has got to pass through the blood in the blood-vessels until it comes to the spinal marrow. Here only it becomes deadly, for it paralyses certain nerves which regulate the respiratory organs. It produces lack of breath first, and then death by suffocation. That is the reason why all people who have died by snake-bite are blue in the face. Now let's assume that your railway Indian is gifted with strong suggestive faculties and succeeds in causing a cramp in the vessels of the poisoned man, so that the vessels close themselves and hold the poison up. We come thus to the following result—the poison does not, or at least not yet, reach the spinal marrow. It thus does not paralyse the respiratory organs. It does not kill. The patient is hypnotized to sleep. When he wakes up and the cramp of his blood-vessels relaxes the poison gets free and goes on—on its way to the spinal marrow. But snake-poison dissolves very quickly. It is not fresh any more now, and the body has got accustomed to it. The man is immune."

So what I had thought to be either a lie or a miracle could be explained thus in a quite natural way.

But not every mysterious thing in India has such an easy natural explanation. There is Dr Sarmananda in Bombay, the yogi who told me the day of my birth and predicted the day of my death. I visited him again later on, and we had long discussions. Many questions he had to answer me, as, for instance, when there would be another war.

"The first signs of it you will see on your way back, *sahib*," he said. "But it will break out much later—in September 1935—yet though it may look like it for some days it won't be the *big* war. . . ."

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The magic island had disappeared.

I went into the music-saloon. It was empty, and I sat down at the grand piano and played softly. When I got up a chair somewhere in the background became alive and shot forth an oldish little man whom I had not seen when I came in. He came up to me and said, beaming, "Thank you so much. You played wonderfully——"

I muttered something about very little practice lately, but he shook his head and went on praising my playing.

"It reminded me of something very wonderful to me," he concluded, his eyes sparkling. "Only five years ago that I sold thirty thousand pianos to Australia. . . ."

By the time we got to Aden Dr Sarmananda's prophecy had come true. Everybody was talking of troopships which had passed—Italian troopships on the way to Somaliland.

"It is not the usual relief. They are preparing war—war with Abyssinia."

And in the Red Sea they passed our very ship—steamer after steamer—with guns, tanks, aeroplanes. Shortly afterwards the historic incident at the Wal-Wal took place, but only at the end of September 1935 did the war break out.

When I got back to Berlin in December 1934 I reported on the subject to Berlin newspapers, and they laughed at me.

"The Italians wouldn't dream of doing such a thing. Fascism can't afford a defeat, and Abyssinia cannot be conquered. Aeroplanes? Against sharpshooters in the bush? Utterly useless. Tanks? What do you want with tanks high up in the mountains! No, no, that war would be a first-class stupidity. Mussolini won't do anything of the kind. . . ."

II

Film work had become rather difficult in Berlin: so many of the best directors, producers, and actors had left

the country. The only man left with whom I collaborated admirably was the director Reinhold Schuenzel. Though he was a 'non-Aryan' too they had given him a special permit to go on working; his films were too good export articles to lose—especially now. There have been, and perhaps there still are, people who took it amiss that he stayed on in Germany. But that is a very easy thing to do, and it does not cost anything, whereas to leave the country in which one had lived one's whole life and where one's work lies is a very difficult thing to do—and it costs a lot. One might equally blame every non-Aryan merchant who stayed on in Germany, where he could maintain himself and his family, instead of emigrating proudly and, perhaps, starving in a foreign country.

And yet I believe that Schuenzel would soon be in the first rank wherever he went—France, England, or America. He is a quiet, extremely intelligent man with a wonderful sense of humour, and a genius at getting the very best from his actors. But he is a cautious man—a man who tries a plank before standing on it. Once he stands on it ten men cannot overthrow him; it has often been tried and it has always failed.

After immense India Germany seemed so small, so narrow, so secluded, and much too much occupied with herself alone. When I saw the films my friends made 'outside' I envied them. They were free to choose their ideas and to proclaim them; they were not threatened every moment with a ban; they had wonderful human material to work with.

More and more I made up my mind to take the great plunge. Most of the men who had tried and made their luck 'outside' had been much more handicapped than I was: they spoke little, if any, English or French—I spoke both languages. They knew almost nothing of the outside world, and to them every mentality but the German was

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an unknown thing. I had travelled much and had friends in every part of the world. And last, but not least—in my horoscope foreign countries were favoured.

It must not be for ever, I thought—perhaps for three or four years. I *must* have contact with the world.

I went to Vienna for the opening night of a play of mine.

Six weeks later I received the laconic information that I was not allowed to work any more in Germany.

I was sleepless that night, and thought of many things: of walks in the Bavarian forests, the smell of firs and freshly cut wood; of the young bulls in the meadows of Oberammergau; of my flat in Berlin, where every piece of furniture reminded me of something particular; of my mother.

Of Putti, who in spite of her Rumanian mother was a German, and a very good German too.

Of the red bricks of the school building; of the books I had grown up with, the heroes I had believed in, the music I loved so much. I said good-bye to my first thirty-three years.

Good-bye to Germany.

III

The first weeks were terrible. Putti had to stay in Berlin, for, to start with, I could not afford to take her with me. I felt utterly, utterly lonely. I knew London, but I had very few acquaintances there, and I was an absolutely unknown man.

It was only after a time that I realized how good a thing that is. I learned the real pleasure of meeting people who did not know, on hearing my name, who I was. I enjoyed being an unknown man in the way that one enjoys a cold bath. I realized that in Berlin at thirty-four I had been living the life of a satiated old man because I had

no need to go on fighting for existence. Now I had to fight again, and I realized again that it is the most exciting thing in the world.

I met English people and liked them. Before I ever began to travel I had heard that the English are the most reserved and standoffish people in the world. I met them first on board ship, and they were much nicer and more polite and friendly than most of the others.

"Oh, yes, on board ship," I was told. "On board ship—that's different."

Then I came to Egypt and India, and everywhere I found charming hospitality and kindness.

"Oh, yes, in the colonies," I was told. "In the colonies—that's different."

And now I met just the same people at home. My first book appeared, and they said they liked it. They were just as nice to me in England as they had been on board ship or in the colonies.

I made mistakes, of course. I did not know, for instance, that one must never say "Hurry up, will you?" to an English page-boy when handing him a telegram to send: that would only make him go even slower than before. One must say, "*Please* don't hurry!" Then he will grin and run like the devil.

And I thought for many weeks that a man called Bill Posters was the most dangerous and unpopular criminal in England because I saw on so many walls the announcement, "Bill Posters Will Be Prosecuted"!

But after a while I began to understand more about the English: first, that it is utterly impossible to say anything about this amazing people and be right. The simpler the formula is that one thinks to have found for them the more hopelessly it is wrong. I have often been asked in England—sometimes even by newspapers—what I think about the English. It is a typically English question, but

the foreigner must realize that it is put to him in just the same way that the dukes and princes of the Middle Ages used to ask their court fools, "Well, fool, tell me, what do you think of me?" hoping to get a clever answer, maybe even a good laugh, and without the slightest intention of attaching any value to it.

I will write my answer now: no people in the world is so difficult to understand as you are, for to every facet you bear also the exact reverse. You are primitive, as shown by the fact that even in your somewhat unsettled climate you still have single instead of double windows, and fireplaces instead of central heating, so that you are roasting on one side and freezing on the other. But that very primitiveness makes you hardy and healthy until you can record such an inscription as the following, which I once saw on a tombstone: "Here lies Evangeline C. Smith, born such and such a date. She died at the age of *only* 81."

And how complicated you are in everything to do with money matters—only to take your coinage. You are the country of the old ladies, they say. But there is a certain old lady in Threadneedle Street who rules the world without making much to-do about it. Moreover in case of real emergency there are always young men enough, and young men whose equals are difficult to find.

You are degenerate, they say; unable to hold your Empire any longer. Yet it is no healthy plan for another nation to try and demonstrate that practically.

You are silly, decided a good friend of mine. "I saw a film some days ago in which the entire action consisted of people throwing whipped cream and whole pies at one another's faces, and the audience roared with laughter at that infantile nonsense."

I did not make any comment on that—I could not very well. He was perfectly right, but I had myself been in that cinema that night and had roared with the others. . . .

I FOLLOW MY STARS

You are hostile to foreigners, they say. But in London are to be found more foreigners than in all other capitals of Europe put together. Perhaps that is why you get that reputation, or perhaps it is because you do not know what it means to be a foreigner, for *you never are foreigners*. A friend of Putti's and mine, Baroness Waldberg of Vienna, once invited a young English girl of very good family to sail up the Danube with her. She told her guest the history of an old monastery they were just passing, and then said, "But that won't interest you as a foreigner——"

Whereupon the young English girl gave her a cold stare and replied, "What a funny thing to say, Baroness. *You are a foreigner*. I'm English!"

You know very well what you are worth: you have no need of any foreigner to tell you that. But there is one thing that, as a foreigner, I must tell you: I like you English people—and for two reasons.

The first is your sense of humour. And the second——?

Some days ago a friend of mine came to take me with him to an all-in wrestling match.

"Terribly exciting," he said. "You must come."

"It can't be as exciting as the book I'm reading," I said. "I'm sorry—but I won't leave this room before I've finished it."

He had to go alone because I had to finish *Alice in Wonderland*, and to-night I am going to read it again.

You have grown up with that sort of thing: *Alice in Wonderland*, *Midshipman Easy*, *Westward Ho!*, *Kim*, *Captains Courageous*, and later Chesterton and Wells—all of them fired through and through with love for the uncanny, the strange, the grotesque, the longing for adventure. And there lies my second reason: *you are the most romantic people in the world!*

